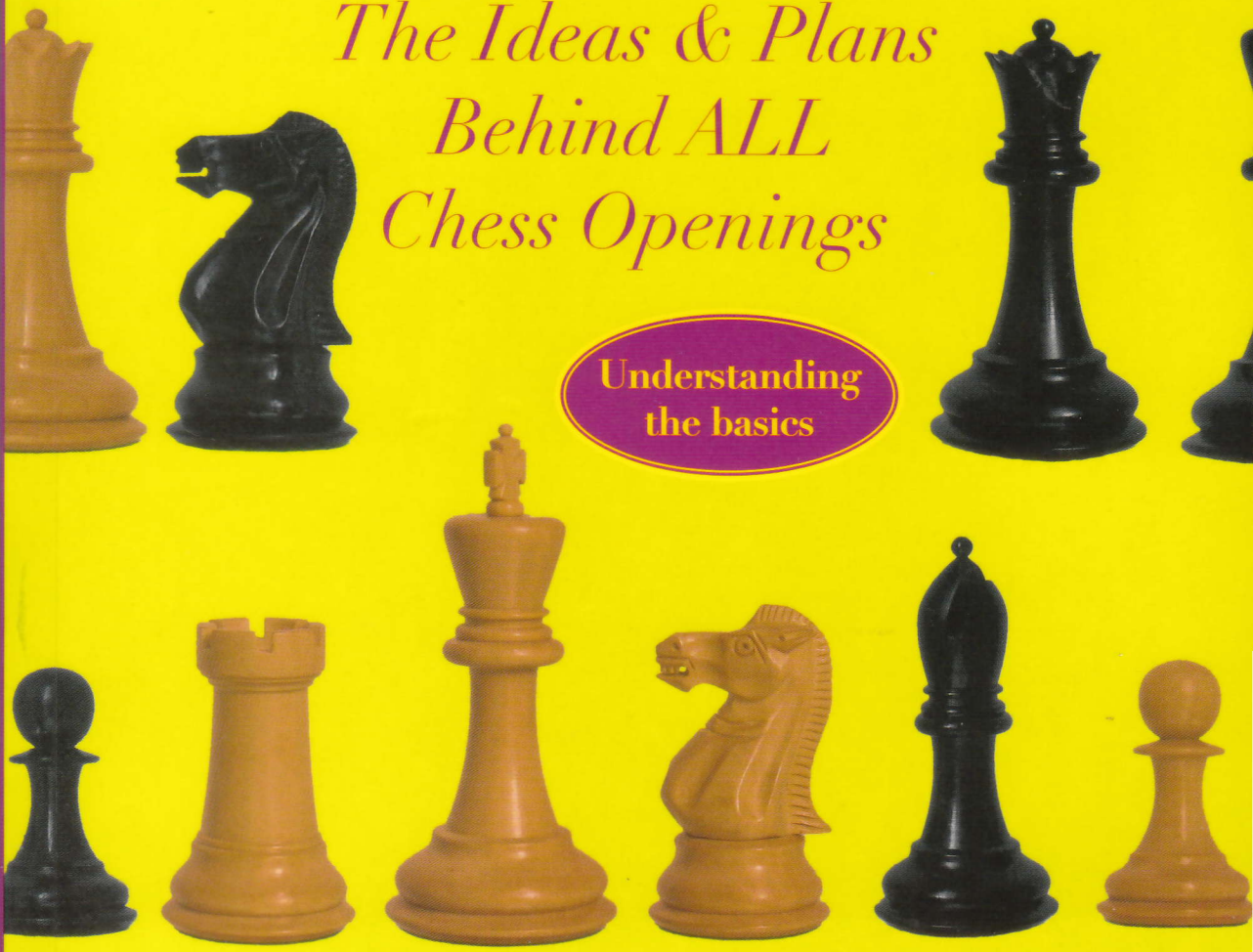
Chess Opening Essentials 4

The Ideas & Plans Behind ALL Chess Openings

Understanding the basics



Stefan Djuric • Dimitri Komarov • Claudio Pantaleoni

1.c4 / 1.♘f3 / OTHER FIRST MOVES

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Chess Opening Essentials

Volume 4: 1.c4 / 1.♘f3 / Other First Moves

• Helps *beginners* to develop a solid understanding of fundamental opening ideas • Gives *casual players* the ability to choose the opening that suits their style and taste • A tool for *club players* to test and review their opening repertoire • A reference book to which *advanced players* keep returning.

Chess Opening Essentials is an accessible primer and a reference book at the same time. It gives a flavour of how every opening works and explains the similarities with other openings as well as the differences. In addition, it also points at the various middlegame plans that apply *after* the opening has ended.

Grandmasters Dimitri Komarov and Stefan Djuric, and International Master Claudio Pantaleoni do not propagate forcing tactical variations to be memorized mechanically, but explain what you should actually be trying to achieve when playing the opening of your choice. They include the main alternative responses and give clear indications for further study.

This thorough, understandable, and very readable manual gives you a foundation on which to build your repertoire. Beginning and improving chess players should get this powerful book before they buy *any* other chess opening book!

* * *

"Not only is the main line explained and the reader made hungry for more, but he gets enough strategic knowledge and insider-tips to get, even if he plays the opening for the first time, into the middlegame safely."

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"All systems are clearly listed and presented, without losing itself in endless variations."

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Stefan Djuric – Dimitri Komarov – Claudio Pantaleoni

Chess Opening Essentials

Volume 4 – 1.c4 / 1.♘f3 / Minor Systems

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Preface

"There are no bad openings, only badly played ones"– Lajos Portisch

This is the fourth and final volume of our series on the opening phase of the game of chess; during our journey we have examined a wide array of openings and their individual and often very different peculiarities.

Which is the best opening of them all?

As any chess teacher can tell you, this perhaps naive but legitimate question is number one on the beginners' FAQ list!

Luckily, there is no answer; it is wise to be wary of books in the series *Crush your Opponents with Defence X*, or *Make them Tremble and Cry with Opening Y* – if only it were that easy. Quite simply the 'best' opening and 'perfect' repertoire do not exist. However, there are undoubtedly openings which are better suited than others to a player's individual strengths and weaknesses – and this is true for both patzer and grandmaster.

As with life, the old adage *to thy own self be true* applies and this concept is the cornerstone of chess improvement.

There are many chess players whose results suffer because they use openings which are completely incompatible with their style of play. Our ambition with this series of books was to supply the willing student with the information necessary to achieve an instructional overview of this intriguing part of the game. Once you have decided on the 'perfect' opening for you, it is possible to look at it more deeply by using one of the many monographs on individual openings and variations that are available on the market.

We have been very careful to try and achieve the right balance; we hope the book is deep enough to be meaningful, without being weighed down by an excessive number of variations.

Stefan Djuric
Dimitri Komarov
Claudio Pantaleoni

Note from the editor: The colours in this book serve to help the reader to navigate more quickly, and to distinguish between, for instance, main lines and others. Coloured text highlights important moves, and also key initial positions and positions arising after important sequences. **Bold type**, be it in black or in **colour**, indicates main lines, which are also classified and sub-classified. Lines given in *italics* are unsound lines that should be avoided. There are also numerous graphic features highlighting moves, plans, and strong or weak points.

Glossary of chess symbols

!!	brilliant move	+–	White has a decisive advantage
!?	interesting move	±	White has a clear advantage
?!	dubious move	±	White has a slight advantage
?	mistake	=	equal
??	blunder	∓	Black has a slight advantage
N	novelty	∓	Black has a clear advantage
↑	initiative	–+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	attack	#	checkmate

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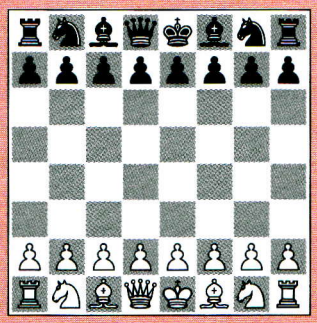
Introduction



We will begin this book with the same question that we asked in the previous books in our series on the 1.e4 & 1.d4 openings and the Indian Defences:

What is the best move in this position?

As noted previously, the classical approach is to occupy the centre with pawns.

1.e4 was by far and away the most popular choice in the 19th century. However, by the early part of the 20th century 1.d4 was equally popular and well respected. Ample evidence of this is provided by the historic 1927 World Championship match between Alekhine and Capablanca: 1.e4 was played only once (in the first game!), and in the 33 (!) games that followed White chose to begin with 1.d4.

So what about openings that do not begin with a direct occupation of the centre?

As we have pointed out previously, the modern chess expert has a variety of tools that were not available to scholars in the past. Just a short trip back in time takes us to the 1940's and 50's – when redoubtable figures such as Euwe, Pachman, Taimanov, Boleslavsky, Geller and Suetin wrote weighty tomes that were a challenge for even the most willing student (not least because they were only available in Russian and German!

These great theoreticians truly deserve our respect as they managed to cohesively catalogue a vast amount of difficult-to-obtain material without the help of the modern aids that we now take so much for granted, namely databases containing millions of games and powerful chess engines (without these formidable programs mistakes in tactical analysis were always on the cards).

However, perhaps the most important resource that we have to today for the assessment of academic theory and for practical competition is statistics.

It is difficult to overstate the value of being able to check the recent performance of every single move in any given game.

Naturally, these tools must be used with intelligence and flexibility.

The following factors always need to be taken into consideration when assessing the worth of a line: the psychological impact of a move may offset its objective defects; the relative skill of the players – some lines are more common at high levels and vice versa; a very recent theoretical novelty can quickly change the standing of an opening line (which may later prove to be excellent, notwithstanding initially discouraging performance figures).

However, in general when a variation has been sufficiently tested and the data

used are gathered from a large enough number of games, the hard facts become clear.

So, what does all this signify? 1.e4 and 1.d4 were – and to a large extent still are – considered to be objectively the best moves; do statistics challenge this assumption?

Let's examine the table at the bottom of this page.

1.♘f3, 1.c4 and 1.g3 have the same performance. 1.d4 is slightly better than 1.e4, but it should be noted that the average Elo of the 1.e4 players in the sample is approximately 10 points below the average of the players who chose 1.d4.

If you adjust the results to take into account Elo differences, the five most common opening moves have the same performance.

1.f4 is the only choice that performs below 50%, but also here the average Elo is a contributing factor to lower performance: 1.f4 players have significantly lower Elo ratings.

Well then. So if all the openings are pretty much the same, was all that stuff about the importance of the centre just hot air?

No, let's not get carried away.

The centre will always be a strategic factor of fundamental importance. However, to understand it properly we must have a more sophisticated concept of occupation. A true strategic advantage is obtained if you manage to combine control and occupation of the centre. The not insignificant problem is that this is rarely possible, unless your opponent is an obliging person and plays very passively!

Any military expert will tell you that the more territory you occupy, the more difficulty you have in controlling it; the corollary is that control by itself is not enough to win a war – you also require occupation.

So what is the best approach in chess?

As always, it is a question of balance: you need to reconcile control and occupation, giving preference to one or the other in accordance with your taste and style of play, but without too much emphasis on one at the expense of the other.

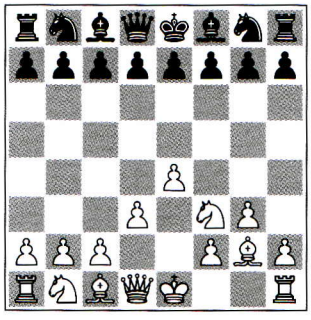
Move	White's performance	Number of games	White's average Elo
Total	55%	1,130,000	2392
1.e4	54%	510,000	2381
1.d4	56%	402,000	2402
1.♘f3	56%	113,000	2402
1.c4	56%	86,000	2407
1.g3	56%	11,000	2393
1.b3	53%	3,700	2364
1.f4	46%	3,300	2327

One only need think of the **Alekhine Defence**, which we discussed in the first volume; if White chooses the Four Pawns Attack, he will physically occupy the whole centre with a menacing phalanx of pawns, but at the same time grant Black ample opportunities for counterplay. On the other hand, with 4.♘f3, White contents himself with a more disciplined control, which has produced better results statistically.

Towards the end of the 1990's, Black players increasingly chose **semi-open defences** to meet 1.e4 (most notably the **Sicilian**), and the **Indian defences** in reply to 1.d4.

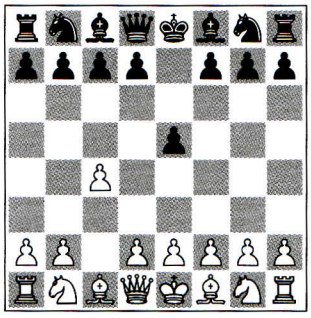
It is therefore only natural that White would also choose set-ups that conceptually involve a delayed occupation of the centre, or, indeed, concede the centre to the opponent with the idea of playing systems traditionally associated with Black with an extra tempo.

A good example is the **King's Indian Attack** 1.♘f3, 2.g3, 3.♗g2, 4.0-0, 5.d3 and 6.e4 (these moves are played virtually regardless of how Black responds).



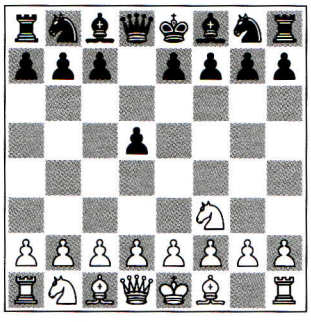
This is none other than a **King's Indian** played by White, and therefore with a move in hand (with greater attacking chances, and hence the name).

Another good example is the **English** – 1.c4: here the most effective response statistically is 1...e5.



And we have a **Sicilian Defence** with reversed colours. However, it is clear that the extra move changes things considerably: here Black is less likely to open the game with a ...d7-d5 push, whereas the equivalent advance for White (in the **Open Sicilian**) is common.

Another example of 'White playing Black' is 1.♘f3 d5.



Now, depending on what White plays, 2.e3 and 3.b3 establishes a **reverse Queen's Indian**, or 2.g3 a **reverse King's Indian**.

However, more often than not, White plays 2.d4, establishing a **Queen's Pawn Game**, or makes the move 2.c4, going into the **Réti**, which we discuss later.

1.♘f3 and **1.c4** are therefore considered to be very elastic moves that can lead to one of the following: distinct and characteristic set-ups with their own individual identities, black defences with reversed colours, or **1.d4** transpositions.

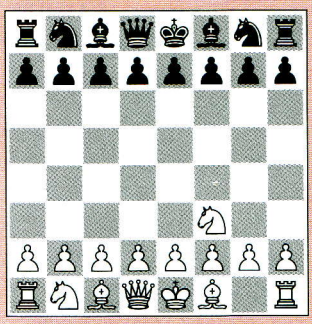
Then there are other first move options where one knows that White has the intention of playing a black defence with an extra move: **1.♘c3**, **1.d3**, **1.e3**, **1.c3** or **1.a3**. None of these may be particularly vigorous. However, they are always going to be useful moves, and while it is true that Black should have few problems achieving equality, he needs to be careful not to become overly ambitious and get into trouble trying to exploit a nonexistent advantage.

In addition, there are the two flank openings **1.b4** and **1.g4**.

On the merits of these opinion is divided: there are those who consider them perfectly playable, while others view them as having more defects than virtues. Their performance is similar to that of Black, and even if they do not give White any particular disadvantage they are dubious in as far as White renounces the advantage of having the first move.

The final group consists of opening moves that can only be described as eccentric (i.e. they do not occupy the centre, or in any way contribute to the direct or indirect control of the centre) – here we see the game begin with a knight jumping to the outer rim of the board, or the advance of the h-pawn – or worse still – its companion on f3. The chief purpose of these lines is to be provocative and few players believe they offer anything more.

1.♘g1-f3



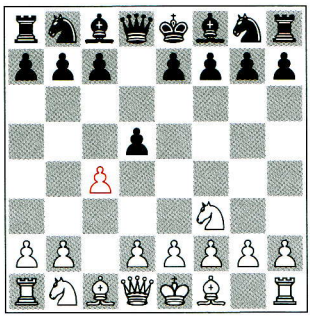
White develops a piece towards the centre; he plays a useful move and postpones a pawn push until he has a better idea of which set-up Black is likely to choose.

Contemporary players are very fond of this flexible approach, even if White obviously denies himself the possibility of playing lines that involve an early f-pawn advance or that begin with placing the knight on e2 or h3.

In the 19th century this knight move was played by Staunton, Blackburne, Zukertort and, most importantly, by Steinitz. However, it was only in the 20th century that it became a perfectly 'normal' move, even if White usually followed it up by playing d4, with a transposition to the **Queen's Pawn Game**.

It is important to note that we very frequently see transpositions to positions that are generally classified as belonging to the **English 1.c4**.

In the 1920's Richard Réti came up with the idea of challenging **1...d5** with the move **2.c4!?**.



Réti's plan was to delay or avoid the d2-d4 push, thus giving 1.♘f3 its own individual and modern identity.

Besides 1...♘g8-f6 and 1...d7-d5, which are the two most common replies, Black can choose from a variety of options that are listed below in ascending order of importance.

Minor Responses to 1.♘g1-f3

A) 1. ... c7-c6

This generally transposes to the **Caro-Kann** after **2.e4**, to the **Slav** after **2.d4** and to the **Réti** in the event of **2.c4**.

B) 1. ... b7-b5

Stopping c4 and preparing ...♗b7.

2. e2-e4

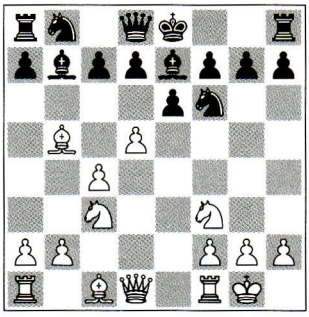
This is more energetic than 2.d4 ♗b7 3.c3!? a6 4.♕b3, which nonetheless leaves White with a preferable position.

2. ... ♗c8-b7

3. ♗f1xb5!

3.♘c3? b4 loses the e4 pawn, whereas after 3.d3 e6 4.g3 c5, the position resembles a **King's Indian Attack** position that does not cause Black any particular problems.

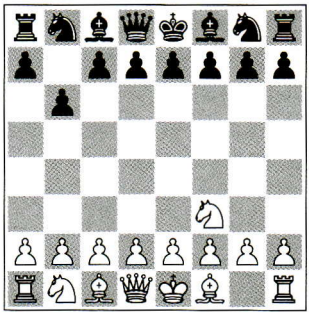
3. ... ♗b7xe4
4. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
5. 0-0 e7-e6
6. c2-c4 ♗f8-e7
7. ♘b1-c3 ♗e4-b7
8. d4-d5



And White has a nice space advantage.

C) 1. ... b7-b6

This continuation is probably better than its reputation would suggest, and recently has become quite fashionable.



2. g2-g3!?

The moves 2.c4 and 2.d4 tend to lead either to the **English Defence** (1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6) or to the **Queen's Indian**, which are discussed in our third volume.

If 2.e4!? is followed by 2...♗b7 3.♘c3 c5 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4, we have a type of **Open Sicilian** in which Black's fianchetto seems somewhat premature.

However, it may be psychologically unpleasant for a player who opens 1.♘f3 to suddenly find himself playing an open game.

2. ... ♗c8-b7
3. ♗f1-g2 ♘g8-f6
4. 0-0 e7-e6
5. d2-d3!?

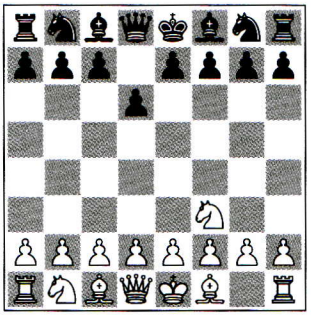
After 5.d4!?, the moves 5...♗e7 6.c4 take us into a **Queen's Indian**.

5. ... d7-d5
6. ♘b1-d2 ♗f8-e7
7. e2-e4 c7-c5

Transposing to the **King's Indian Attack**, with chances for both players.

D) 1. ... d7-d6

It is clear that the plan is to follow this up with the pawn advance ...e7-e5.



2. c2-c4

Otherwise 2.d4!, with a transposition to the **1.d4 d6** Defence, which is discussed in the 2nd volume of our series.

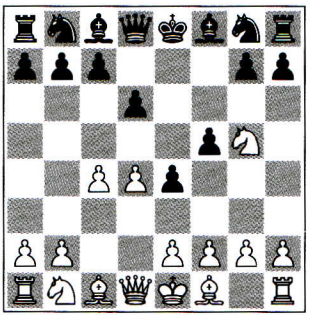
2. ... e7-e5

3. d2-d4

For 3.♘c3, go to the section on the **English Opening** below.

3. ... e5-e4!?

4. ♘f3-g5 f7-f5



With a double-edged position.

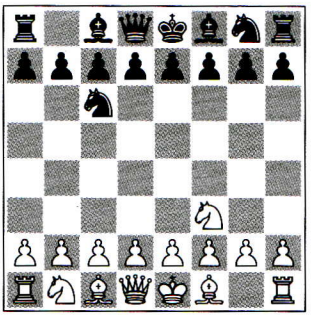
E) 1. ... e7-e6

An elastic move with innumerable transpositional possibilities. However, Black must remember that if White responds with

2. e2-e4

he will be forced to play a **French** after 2...d5 or the ...e6 **Sicilian** after 2...c5.

F) 1. ... ♘b8-c6



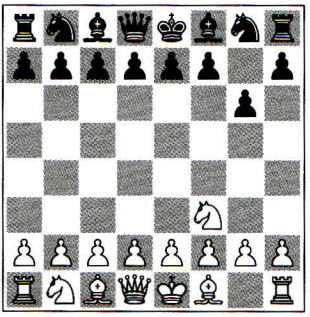
After 2.d4 d5, you transpose to the **Chigorin Defence**.

In reply to

2. e2-e4

Black can choose to play either an **open game** by responding with **2...e5**, the **Scandinavian Defence** by playing **2...d5**, or a type of **Modern Defence** with the moves **2...d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♗g4**.

G) 1. ... g7-g6



Obviously, it is now possible to transpose to the **Modern**, **Pirc**, **King's Indian**, **Grünfeld** or the **English**, depending on whether White plays or does not play c4 or d4, and equally on whether Black plays or does not play ...♘f6 and pushes his pawn to d6 or d5.

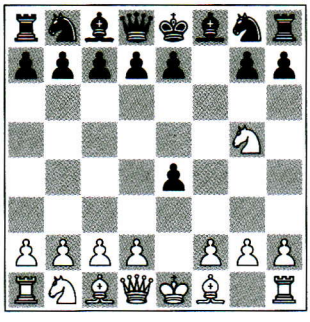
H) 1. ... f7-f5

Black would like to play the **Dutch Defence**. And he will be granted his wish, if White opts for d2-d4 either now or in the near future. A highly interesting alternative is for White to play c2-c4 instead, and then to prepare the push e2-e4 with the move d2-d3; this approach will be discussed later in the section on the **English Opening**.

The only line that has its own distinct identity is

2. e2-e4!? f5xe4

3. ♘f3-g5

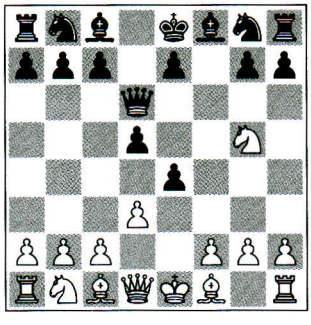


White hopes to win back the pawn, relying on some tactical motifs on the light squares.

3. ... d7-d5!

White can respond to 3...♘f6 with 4.d3!; capturing on d3 is dangerous and other moves give White good compensation.

4. d2-d3 ♕d8-d6!



The effectiveness of Botvinnik's move makes this a less appealing line for White. The idea is to control the g6-square and to allow an exchange of queens, but on d6 rather than on d8.

Do not forget that 4...exd3?! is far from wise: 5.♗xd3 ♘f6?! 6.♗xh7! and White is winning.

5. ♘b1-c3!

The idea of Black's previous move is that after the spontaneous 5.dxe4 Black has 5...h6! and the check on h5 can be met by 6...g6 and Black has an advantage.

5. ... h7-h6

6. ♘c3-b5

White adds a tactical element to his initiative.

6. ... ♕d6-c6

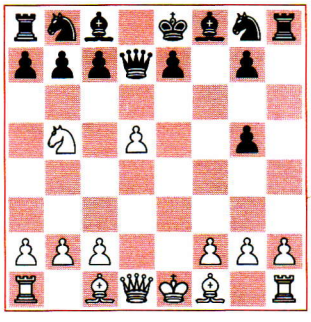
Not 6...♕b4+? 7.c3! ♕xb5 8.♕h5+, with a winning attack.

7. d3xe4

7.♘xc7+ does not seem to offer more than a draw by perpetual check: 7...♕xc7 8.♕h5+ ♔d7 9.♘f7 ♘f6 10.♘e5+! ♔d8 11.♘f7+.

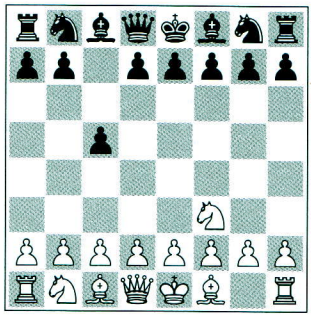
7. ... h6xg5

8. e4xd5 ♕c6-d7



It is difficult to assess how much compensation White has received for the piece.

I) 1. ... c7-c5



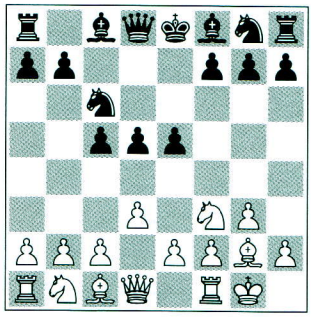
A common way to proceed.

Most of the time White will transpose to a **Symmetrical English** position with 2.c4, but, obviously, Black must take into account the possibility of 2.e4!? and playing a **Sicilian**.

A relatively popular continuation is 2.b3, which has similar strategic objectives to the **Larsen Opening** 1.b3, and is therefore examined in that section.

A specific variation of a standard opening can be reached after 1.♘f3 c5 with the moves:

2.	**g2-g3!?**	**♘b8-c6**
3.	**♗f1-g2**	**e7-e5**
4.	**0-0!?**	**d7-d5**
5.	**d2-d3**	



And we are in a line of the King's Indian Attack, i.e. in a main line of the **King's Indian** with reversed colours.

Given the importance of every tempo in an aggressive defence such as the King's Indian, having an extra move as White is significant. However, it is difficult to say if the extra tempo is sufficient to represent a concrete advantage.

Without doubt Black would be wise to avoid overly aggressive continuations such as 5...f6 or, worse still, 5...f5, but rather the more solid **5...♘f6** or **5...♗e7**, with a balanced position.

Wojtkiewicz,Aleksander
Bronstein,David
Reykjavik 1994 (8)

1.♘f3 b5 2.e4 ♗b7 3.♗xb5 ♗xe4 4.d4 ♘f6 5.0-0 e6 6.c4 ♗b7 7.♘c3 ♗e7 8.d5 0-0 9.♗a4 ♘a6 10.a3 ♘c5 11.♗c2 a5 12.♗e3 exd5 13.cxd5 g6 14.♖e1 ♘h5 15.♘e5 ♘g7 16.♗d4 a4 17.♘xa4 d6 18.♘g4 f5 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♕d4+ ♗f6 21.♘xf6 ♖xf6 22.♘c3 ♔g8 23.f4 ♖f7 24.b4 ♘d7 25.♗a4 ♘f6 26.♗c6 ♖b8 27.b5 ♗xc6 28.dxc6 d5 29.♖ad1 ♕d6 30.a4 ♖a8 31.♖e5 ♕a3 32.♘xd5 ♖xa4 33.♘xf6+ ♖xf6 34.♕d8+ ♖f8 35.♖e8 ♕c5+ 36.♔h1 ♖b4 37.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 38.♕xc7 ♖xb5 39.h3 ♖b8 40.♕d7 ♕c5 41.c7 ♖f8 42.♕d5+ ♕xd5 43.♖xd5 ♔f7 44.♖d8 1-0

Karttunen,Mika
Solak,Dragan
Calvia ol 2004 (2)

1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.♘f3 e4 4.♘g5 f5 5.g3 ♘f6 6.♘c3 h6 7.♘h3 g5 8.f3 ♗g7 9.♗g2 0-0 10.fxe4 ♘xe4 11.♘xe4 fxe4 12.♘f2 ♗f5 13.0-0 ♕e7 14.♗e3 ♘d7 15.♖c1 ♘f6 16.b4

d5 17.c5 ♖f7 18.a4 ♖af8 19.b5 ♕e6 20.♕b3 ♔h7 21.a5 ♔g6 22.♕a2 ♖e8 23.♕a4 h5 24.h3 ♖ef8 25.♕b3 ♖h8 26.♔h2 ♗f8 27.♗d2 ♕d7 28.♔g1 c6 29.b6 a6 30.♔h2 ♗g7 31.♘d1 h4 32.g4 ♗xg4 33.hxg4 h3 34.♗h1 ♘xg4+ 35.♔g1 ♗xd4+ 36.e3 h2+ 37.♔g2 ♘xe3+ 0-1

Lautier,Joel
Bareev,Evgeny
Biel 1991 (13)

1.♘f3 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3.♘g5 d5 4.d3 ♕d6 5.dxe4 h6 6.♕h5+ g6 7.♕h4 c6 8.♗d3 ♗g7 9.♘f3 g5 10.♕h5+ ♔f8 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.e5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.f4 ♗xf4 15.♗xf4 gxf4 16.♘c3 ♘f6 17.♕h4 e5 18.♘e2 ♗g4 19.♘xf4 exf4 20.h3 ♔f7 21.hxg4 ♕e5 22.♕h2 ♕e3+ 23.♔h1 ♕g3 24.♖xf4 ♕xh2+ 25.♔xh2 ♔g7 26.♖af1 ♖hf8 27.♔g3 ♖ae8 28.♔h4 ♘d7 29.♖xf8 ♘xf8 30.g5 hxg5+ 31.♔xg5 ♘e6+ 32.♔g4 ♘c5 33.♗f5 ♘e4 34.♔f4 ♘f6 35.g4 d4 36.♖f2 c5 37.♖h2 c4 38.♖d2 ♖d8 39.g5 ♘d5+ 40.♔e5 ♘e3 41.♗e6 d3 42.cxd3 cxd3 43.♔e4 ♖d6 44.♔xe3 ♖xe6+ 45.♔xd3 ♖d6+ 46.♔e3 ♖xd2 47.♔xd2 ♔g6 48.♔e3 ½-½

Dimitrijevic,Aleksandra
Markus,Robert
Subotica 2003 (6)

1.♘f3 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3.♘g5 d5 4.d3 ♕d6 5.dxe4 h6 6.♘h3 dxe4 7.♕h5+ g6 8.♕b5+ ♘c6 9.♘c3 ♗xh3 10.gxh3 0-0-0 11.♗e3 ♗g7 12.♗e2 ♘f6 13.a3 e5 14.♕a4 ♘d4 15.0-0 a6 16.♖ad1 ♖d7 17.♗xd4 exd4 18.♘b5 ♕e5 19.♘xd4 ♖hd8 20.c3 ♖d6 21.b4 ♘d5 22.♕b3 ♘f4 23.♗g4+ ♔b8 24.b5 axb5 25.♔h1 h5 26.♘xb5 hxg4 27.♘xd6 cxd6 28.♕f7 ♕f6 29.♕c4 d5 30.♕b5 ♕c6 31.♕a5 ♖c8 32.♕b4 ♕xc3 33.♕d6+ ♕c7 34.♕b4 d4 35.♕b1 ♘d3 0-1

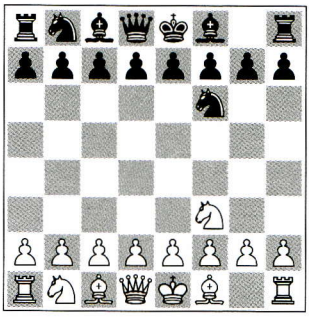
Carlsen,Magnus
Dolmatov,Sergey
Moscow 2004 (3)

1.♘f3 f5 2.d3 d6 3.e4 e5 4.♘c3 ♘c6 5.exf5 ♗xf5 6.d4 ♘xd4 7.♘xd4 exd4 8.♕xd4 ♘f6 9.♗c4 c6 10.♗g5 b5 11.♗b3 ♗e7 12.0-0-0 ♕d7 13.♖he1 ♔d8 14.♖xe7 ♕xe7 15.♕f4 ♗d7 16.♘e4 d5 17.♘xf6 h6 18.♗h4 g5 19.♕d4 1-0

Forster,Richard
Kortchnoi,Viktor
Lenzerheide ch-SUI 2006 (9)

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 c5 3.♗g2 ♘c6 4.0-0 e5 5.d3 ♗e7 6.c4 ♘f6 7.♗g5 d4 8.♖e1 0-0 9.e3 dxe3 10.♗xe3 h6 11.♘c3 ♗e6 12.♕b3 ♖b8 13.♘d2 ♘g4 14.♘d5 ♗d6 15.♘e4 ♘xe3 16.♖xe3 b5 17.cxb5 ♘d4 18.♕c4 ♖xb5 19.♖b1 ♖b4 20.♕a6 ♗xd5 21.♕xd6 ♘c2 22.♕xe5 ♗xa2 23.♖f1 ♘xe3 24.fxe3 ♕xd3 25.g4 ♕xe3+ 26.♔h1 ♕d4 27.♕h5 ♖xb2 28.♘g3 g6 0-1

1.♘g1-f3 ♘g8-f6



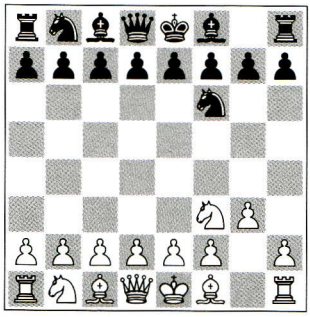
Black simply copies White's move and waits. Former World Correspondence Champion Hans Berliner is the author of a book in which he states with the certainty of a true believer that 1.d4 is superior to all other openings. Then, with equally dogmatic conviction, Berliner declares that there is no doubt that the best answer to 1.♘f3 is 1...♘f6.

Usually White replies with one of the following moves:

- 2.c4 – the **English Opening**.
- 2.d4 – covered in our 2nd and 3rd volumes on the **Queen's Pawn Game** and **Indian defences**.
- 2.b3 – discussed in the section on **1.b3**.

Here we will look at the individual lines that arise after **2.g3**.

2. g2-g3



Please note that besides the lines we are about to look at, it is also possible to play 2...d5, with a transposition to the **1.♘f3** d5 variation, and 2...d6, which can lead to either a **Pirc** or a **King's Indian** after 3.d4.

A) 2. ... b7-b5

An interesting move: it controls c4 and it frees b7 for the bishop, from where it will challenge its opposite number on g2. The downside is that on b5 the pawn makes it easier for White to open up the queenside with a2-a4.

3. ♗f1-g2

The immediate 3.a4!? is also interesting.

3. ... ♗c8-b7
4. 0-0 e7-e6
5. d2-d3!?

Establishing a type of **King's Indian Attack** set-up. After the natural 5.d4, you have a sort of **Queen's Indian** where the inability of White to advance his pawn to c4 would appear to give Black an easy game.

5. ... d7-d5

Otherwise 5...d6, which maintains control of the e5-square.

6. ♘b1-d2 ♗f8-e7
7. e2-e4 c7-c5
8. ♖f1-e1 ♘b8-c6

More prudent than 8...0-0, which grants White a typical initiative with 9.e5 ♘fd7 10.♘f1 ♘c6 11.h4 ♕c7 12.♗f4 a5 13.♘1h2, and when this knight gets to g4, White's kingside pressure starts to make itself felt.

9. ♕d1-e2 ♕d8-c7
10. c2-c3

With the black king yet to castle, the e4-e5 advance is less effective.

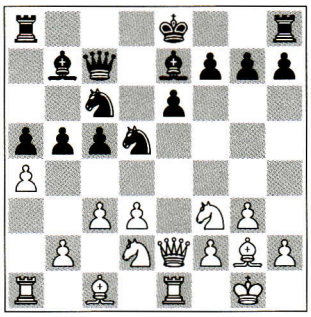
10. ... a7-a5

Now, given that Black has lost tempi on the queenside, it is probably best for White to open the position with:

11. e4xd5! ♘f6xd5

After 11...exd5 12.d4 White has a plus.

12. a2-a4



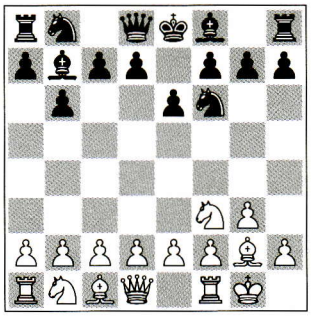
with a small advantage for White.

B) 2. ... b7-b6

A natural and solid move: Black's bishop will soon be facing its white counterpart without creating the weaknesses associated with the two-square advance of the same pawn.

3. ♗f1-g2 ♗c8-b7

4. 0-0 e7-e6



Lines where White plays c2-c4, either now or later, will be discussed in the section on the **English Opening**.

White's set-up is not particularly aggressive and so a second fianchetto with 4...g6!? comes into consideration.

5. d2-d3

5.d4 ♗e7 (5...c5!?) 6.c4 transposes to the **Queen's Indian**.

5. ... d7-d5

As with 2...b5, also here Black can continue in **Sicilian** style with 5...c5 6.e4 d6, with a more fluid centre.

6. ♘b1-d2 ♗f8-e7

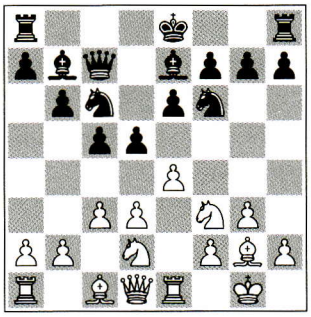
7. e2-e4 c7-c5

Not 7...dxe4 8.dxe4 ♘xe4? 8.♘e5! – with a decisive advantage.

8. ♖f1-e1 ♘b8-c6

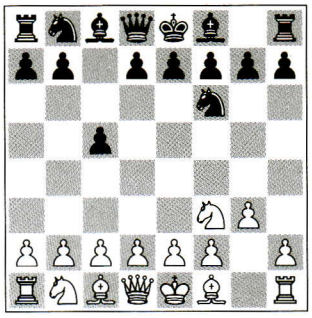
Also in this position, it is more prudent for Black to delay castling.

9. c2-c3 ♕d8-c7



and we have a complex game that offers both sides chances.

C) 2. ... c7-c5

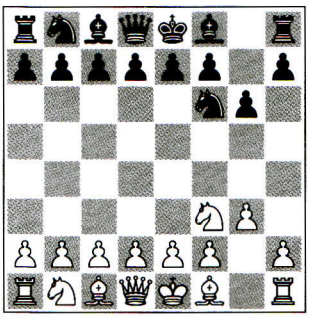


An invitation to play a **Symmetrical English**, if White replies c2-c4.

3. ♗f1-g2 ♘b8-c6
4. 0-0 e7-e5
5. d2-d3 d7-d5

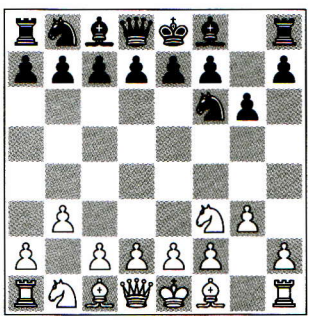
and we are in the **Classical Variation of the King's Indian Attack**, the merits of which are discussed in the section on the 1...c5 variation.

D) 2. ... g7-g6



Naturally, it is now possible to transpose to the **King's Indian**, the **Grünfeld Indian** or the **English Opening**.
Here we will discuss the independent lines.

D1) 3. b2-b3!?



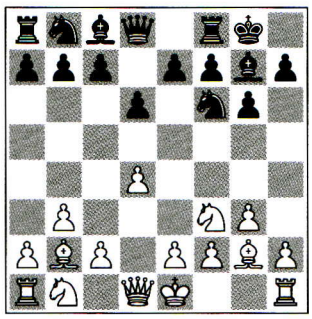
This solid prophylactic move introduces the Double Fianchetto Variation: although it is logical to challenge the role of the g7 bishop by developing the bishop to b2, it is a little slow to give White any objective advantage.
Nonetheless, it may be psychologically disconcerting for Black, who will not want to see the aggressive nature of the kingside fianchetto neutralized.

3. ... ♗f8-g7
4. ♗c1-b2 0-0
5. ♗f1-g2 d7-d6

This line, in the spirit of the **King's Indian**, is the most popular choice.

6. d2-d4

To prevent ...e7-e5.



Usually this position is classified as part of the **Fianchetto Variation** of the **King's Indian** and it is often reached by means of 1.d4, 2.♘f3, 3.g3 etc, but given that White does not always push c2-c4, we have decided to look at it here instead.

6. ... e7-e5!?

The most thematic move. However, it is also possible to prepare this advance with 6...♘bd7 or begin queenside play with either 6...c6 or 6...c5.

7. d4xe5 ♘f6-d7

After 7...♘g4, White can play the irritating 8.h3! ♘xe5 9.♘xe5 ♗xe5 10.♗xe5 dxe5 11.♕xd8 ♖xd8 12.♘d2; White has only a minimal advantage, but at the same time he has robbed Black of virtually all winning chances.

8. 0-0

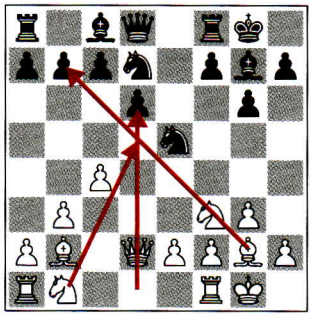
Surprisingly, White can also give the position a more tactical character by preparing queenside castling with 8.♘c3!? dxe5 9.♕d2 ♘c6 10.0-0-0 a5 11.h4, and we have an unclear game.

8. ... ♘b8-c6

8...dxe5!? is perhaps better.

9. ♕d1-d2 ♘c6xe5

10. c2-c4



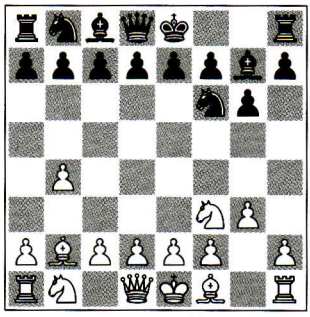
Theory estimates White to have a small but unpleasant advantage.

D2) 3. b2-b4!?

This extended fianchetto is considered to be more combative than the normal one, however, the degree to which a move is aggressive is not simply determined by how far it extends towards enemy territory.

3. ... ♗f8-g7

4. ♗c1-b2



4. ... d7-d5!

Gaining space in the centre in an attempt to demonstrate that the pawn on b4 is more of a liability than an asset.

4...0-0 5.c4! d6 6.♗g2 e5 7.d3 transposes to positions typical of the **English with ...e5**.

5. ♗f1-g2 0-0

6. 0-0 c7-c6!?

7. d2-d3 a7-a5

8. a2-a3 a5xb4

9. a3xb4 ♖a8xa1

10. ♗b2xa1 ♕d8-b6

with a balanced position.

D3) 3. ♗f1-g2 ♗f8-g7

4. 0-0 0-0

5. d2-d3

If White were to play both c2-c4 and d2-d4, there would be a transposition to the **King's Indian**.

When White advances his pawn to c4 only, we enter the **English**.

5. ... d7-d6

5...d5!? breaks the symmetry; we will look at this in the section on 1...d5.

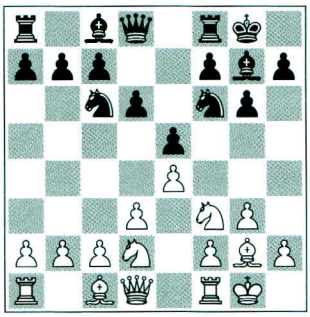
6. e2-e4 e7-e5

6...c5!? transposes to a **Closed Sicilian**.

7. ♘b1-d2

7.c3!? is an interesting alternative.

7. ... ♘b8-c6!?



Black can continue to copy White's moves with 7...♘bd7 8.a4 a5 8.♘c4 ♘c5, but the resulting positions are a little arid.

8.	**c2-c3**	**a7-a5**
9.	**a2-a4**	**b7-b6!?**
10.	**♘d2-c4**	**♗c8-a6**

and both sides have chances.

Spraggett,Kevin
Alonso,Salvador

San Sebastian open 2005 (6)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.b3 ♗g7 4.♗b2 c5 5.c4 ♘c6 6.♗g2 d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 a6 9.♘c3 ♖b8 10.♕d2 b5 11.♖fd1 bxc4 12.dxc4 ♘a5 13.♘e1 ♗b7 14.♗xb7 ♖xb7 15.♘d3 ♘c6 16.e3 ♕a8 17.♕e2 ♘b4 18.♘f4 ♖bb8 19.f3 ♘c6 20.♖d2 ♘e5 21.♖f1 ♖fd8 22.♘a4 ♘e8 23.♗c3 ♘c6 24.♗xg7 ♔xg7 25.h4 ♘f6 26.g4 h6 27.♘c3 ♘e5 28.♕g2 ♕c6 29.e4 e6 30.g5 hxg5 31.hxg5 ♘h7 32.♘fe2 ♕c7 33.f4 ♘c6 34.f5 gxf5 35.exf5 ♖g8 36.fxe6 fxe6 37.♘f4 ♖be8 38.♖d3 ♘d4 39.♘h3 ♘f5 40.g6 ♘f6 41.♘e4 ♕c6 42.♕b2 e5 43.♘xf6 ♔xf6 44.♖d5 ♔e6 45.♖xf5 ♖xg6+ 46.♔h2 1-0

Minasian,Artashes
Bartel,Mateusz

Warsaw Ech 2005 (7)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 b5 3.♗g2 ♗b7 4.0-0 e6 5.d3 d5 6.e4 dxe4 7.♘fd2 ♕c8 8.♘xe4 ♘xe4 9.dxe4 ♘d7 10.a4 a6 11.♕e2 ♗c6 12.♘d2 bxa4 13.e5 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 ♕b7+ 15.♔g1 ♕b5 16.♕e4 0-0-0 17.♘c4 ♗b4 18.♗e3 ♕d5 19.♕h4 ♗e7 20.♕xe7 ♕xc4 21.f4 h5 22.♖a3 h4 23.♖c3 ♕e4 24.♗b6 h3 25.♔f2 ♕g2+ 26.♔e1 ♕e4+ 27.♔f2 ♕g2+ 28.♔e1 ♕e4+ 29.♗e3 ♖he8 30.♕xf7 ♕b4 31.♔f2 ♕xb2 32.♗d4 ♕b7 33.♔e3 g5 34.f5 ♕d5 35.♖d1 c6 36.♖cd3 ♘xe5 37.♗xe5 ♕xe5+ 38.♔d2 ♖xd3+ 39.cxd3 exf5 40.♖c1 ♕b2+ 41.♖c2 ♖e2+ 42.♔xe2 ♕xc2+ 43.♔e3 ♕c5+ 44.♔d2 g4 45.♔e2 ♔d8 46.♔f1 a3 0-1

Polugaevsky,Lev
Tal,Mikhail

Leningrad ch-URS 1971 (12)

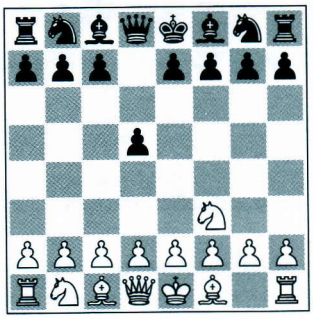
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.b3 ♗g7 4.♗b2 d6 5.d4 0-0 6.♗g2 e5 7.dxe5 ♘g4 8.h3 ♘xe5 9.♘xe5 ♗xe5 10.♗xe5 dxe5 11.♕xd8 ♖xd8 12.♘d2 ♘d7 13.0-0-0 ♖e8 14.♘e4 ♔g7 15.g4 h6 16.♖d3 ♘f6 17.♘xf6 ♔xf6 18.♖hd1 c6 19.♖f3+ ♔g7 20.♖e3 g5 21.a4 ♔f6 22.a5 a6 23.♔b2 ♗e6 24.♔c3 ♖ac8 25.♔b4 h5 26.♗f3 hxg4 27.hxg4 ♖cd8 28.♖xd8 ♖xd8 29.♔c5 ♖d4 30.c4 ♗xg4 31.♗xg4 ♖xg4 32.♔b6 ♖f4 33.f3 e4 34.♔xb7 ♔e5 35.♔xa6 ♔d4 36.♖xe4+ ♖xe4 37.fxe4 g4 38.♔b7 g3 39.a6 g2 40.a7 g1♕ 41.a8♕ c5 42.♔b6 ♔c3 43.♕d5 ♕g8 44.♔xc5 ♔xb3

45.♕d3+ ♔b2 46.♕d6 ♔b3
47.♕b6+ ♔c2 48.♔b5 ♕g4 49.♕d4
♕xe2 50.♔b6 ♕h2 51.e5 ♔b3
52.c5 f6 53.c6 fxe5 54.♕d5+ ♔a4
55.♕b5+ ♔a3 56.c7 1-0

Smyslov,Vasily
Borisenko,Georgy
Moscow tt 1964

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.b4 c6 4.♘a3
♗g7 5.♗g2 ♘a6 6.♖b1 0-0 7.0-0 d5
8.c4 ♗f5 9.d3 ♕d7 10.b5 cxb5
11.♖xb5 ♖ad8 12.♗b2 ♗e6 13.♘e5
♕c8 14.♕a1 ♗h6 15.e3 ♘c7 16.♖b3
♘fe8 17.♖c1 f6 18.♘f3 ♕a8 19.♘d4
♗f7 20.♘ab5 e5 21.♘e2 ♘xb5
22.♖xb5 ♘c7 23.♖c5 ♘a6 24.♖b5
♘c7 25.♖b3 ♖fe8 26.♘c3 a6 27.a4
♗g7 28.♖b6 f5 29.cxd5 ♘xd5
30.♘xd5 ♗xd5 31.♗xd5+ ♖xd5
32.♕a2 ♕d8 33.♖xb7 ♔h8 34.♖cc7
♖g8 35.♕c4 ♖xd3 36.♖xg7 ♖d1+
37.♔g2 ♖xg7 38.♗xe5 ♖d7 39.♖b8
♕xb8 40.♗xb8 h5 41.♗e5 ♔h7
42.♗xg7 1-0

1.♘g1-f3 d7-d5



1...d5 is another very natural move: Black occupies the centre and allows White to play an **Indian Defence** (1.d4 ♘f6) with an extra tempo.

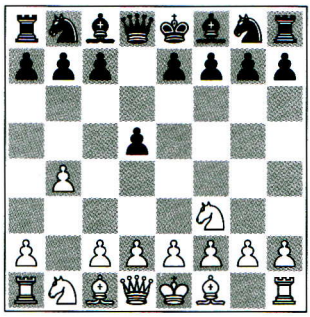
At this point, White has lots of playable moves:

- 2.c4; this will be discussed in the next section,
- 2.b3; see the **Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack**,
- 2.d4 transposes to a **Queen's Pawn Game** – the subject of the second volume in this series.

Minor lines after 1.♘g1-f3 d7-d5

A) 2. b2-b4

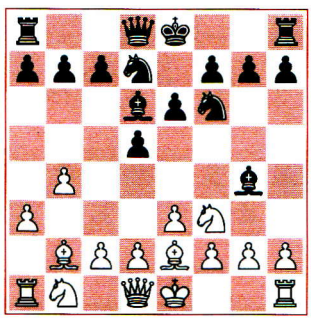
This advance fails to convince if Black's dark-squared bishop has not been fianchettoed.



2. ... ♗c8-g4!?

This is the best performing of the many moves on offer: Black plays a **Trompowsky** a tempo down, encouraged by the fact that White's b2-b4 advance is questionable.

3. ♗c1-b2 ♘b8-d7
4. e2-e3 ♘g8-f6
5. ♗f1-e2 e7-e6
6. a2-a3 ♗f8-d6

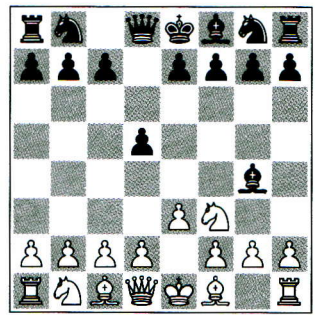


and Black has an acceptable position.

B) 2. e2-e3

Trying to play a **Nimzo-/Queen's Indian** with reversed colours. However, Black is not obliged to play ...c7-c5, but rather can use the same ideas as in the previous line:

2. ... ♗c8-g4



Again Black solves his problems by playing a **Trompowsky** a tempo down. After 2...e6, probably White's best option is to begin to establish a Colle set-up with 3.d4.

In response to 2...c5, White could play the interesting 3.c4!?, which would establish a **Benoni** with an extra tempo if Black replies 3...d4, or otherwise a line from the **Symmetrical English** after 3...♘f6 4.cxd5.

Black may well consider 2...g6!?, with the plan of playing a **Catalan** with the black pieces.

3. h2-h3 ♗g4-h5
4. b2-b3 ♘b8-d7
5. ♗c1-b2 e7-e6
6. ♗f1-e2 ♘g8-f6
7. d2-d3 ♗f8-d6

with a balanced game.

C) 2. d2-d3

Preparing a **King's Indian Attack**, but when this move is played this early, it allows Black:

2. ... ♘b8-c6!

Now the ...e7-e5 advance cannot be prevented (unless White plays the paradoxical 3.d4!?).

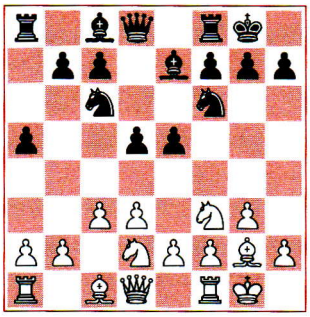
3. g2-g3 e7-e5
4. ♗f1-g2

White is unlikely to gain the upper hand by playing a **reverse Pirc**.

4. ... ♘g8-f6

It is probably best to avoid overly aggressive lines such as 4...f5, when having one tempo less could become a significant handicap.

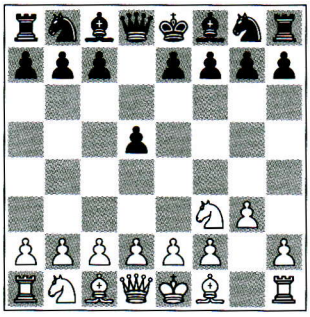
5. 0-0 ♗f8-e7
6. c2-c3 a7-a5
7. ♘b1-d2 0-0



Black leaves the opening phase of the game in reasonable shape.

We will now look at the most important of the minor variations:

D) 2. g2-g3



Though this move often leads to a **King's Indian Attack**, it is more elastic than 2.d3 as you can choose between d3 or d4, depending on the circumstances.

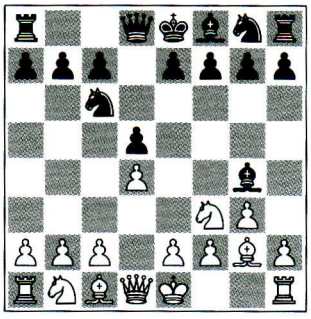
D1) 2. ... ♘b8-c6

Black intends to occupy the centre with an ...e7-e5 pawn advance.

3. d2-d4

3.c4!? d4 transposes to the **Réti**.

3. ... ♗c8-g4
4. ♗f1-g2



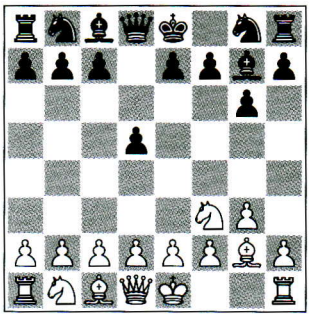
4. ... ♕d8-d7
5. h2-h3 ♗g4-f5
6. c2-c4

The position is complicated, but results tend to be slightly in White's favour.

D2) 2. ... g7-g6

A nice move; Black will prepare the pawn push to e5 with ...♗g7.

3. ♗f1-g2 ♗f8-g7



Now White has two alternatives: the first is to prevent the advance ...e7-e5 by playing 4.d4 , and when Black develops his knight to f6, we are in the **Fianchetto Variation** of the **Grünfeld**. The other option is to allow Black to expand unopposed:

4. 0-0

(or 4.d3)

4. ... e7-e5

5. d2-d3

And we are in the **Fianchetto Variation** of the **Pirc** with reversed colours.

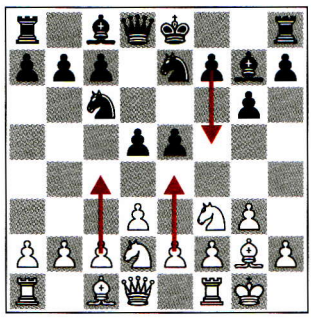
5. ... ♘b8-c6

Another playable possibility is 5...♘e7, and White keeps his options open as to whether he will develop his queen's knight to c6 or not.

6. ♘b1-d2

The advance 6.e4 offers nothing more than equality: 6...♘ge7 7.♘c3 dxe4.

6. ... ♘g8-e7



Better here than on f6 so as to not block a possible advance of the f-pawn.

7. e2-e4

The thematic pawn advance. However, when you think that in the analogous variation of the **Pirc** (and therefore with a tempo less), ...c7-c5 is considered the most reliable move, it is curious that here the move 7.c4!? is so little played.

7. ... 0-0

8. c2-c3 a7-a5

9. a2-a4 h7-h6

10. ♖f1-e1 ♗c8-e6

with equality.

D3) 2. ... e7-e6

A solid move that does not create a position with its own identity, and which usually transposes to the **English**, **Réti**, **Catalan** or the **Tarrasch**.

D4) 2. ... ♗c8-g4

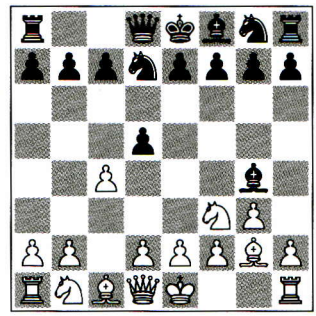
If with the **Trompowsky** (1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5) White seeks an advantage, Black hopes that White's extra move (g3) will prove not to be that significant.

3. ♗f1-g2

However, the extra move does have an impact: in the Trompowsky, if Black wants to establish a kingside fianchetto, he must accept unpleasant doubled f-pawns; here White does not have this problem.

3. ... ♘b8-d7

4. c2-c4!



The best policy is to respond immediately; Black should not be allowed to occupy the centre with ...e7-e5 unchallenged.

4. ... e7-e6

The other option is 4...c6, which transposes to Variation D6.

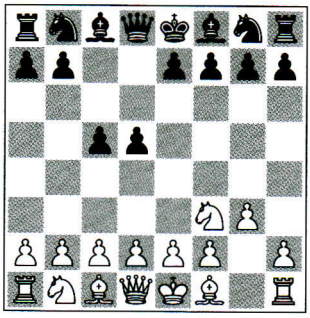
5. c4xd5!? e6xd5
6. h2-h3 ♗g4-h5

6...♗xf3 is playable, but having the bishop pair may become a concrete advantage for White.

7. 0-0 ♘g8-f6
8. ♘b1-c3 c7-c6
9. d2-d3

The position is strategically complex and any result is possible.

D5) 2. ... c7-c5



Black is not concerned about playing Indian positions a tempo down.

3. c2-c4!?

White plays actively so as to make the extra tempo count.

The natural 3.♗g2 ♘c6 4.0-0 e5 5.d3 takes us to a position that has already been examined in the section on 1...c5. In this variation, 4.d4!? is an interesting idea that establishes a **Grünfeld** with reversed colours and an extra tempo: Black usually responds in solid fashion with 4...e6, and after c2-c4 you transpose to a **Catalan** or the **Tarrasch**.

3. ... d5-d4

The cautious 3...e6 leads into other defences, whereas after 3...♘f6 4.cxd5 ♘xd5, we are in a **Symmetrical English**.

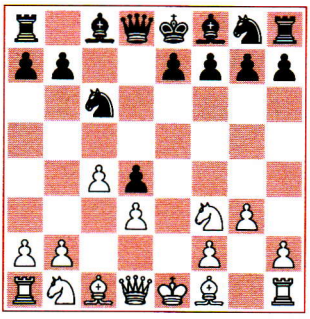
4. e2-e3!?

If White wishes to play a **Benoni** with reversed colours, it is best to play this move before Black pushes his pawn to e5 and retakes on d4 with the e-pawn. 4.b4!? cxb4 5.a3 is also worth a look; White is playing a **Benko** with an extra tempo.

4. ... ♘b8-c6
5. e3xd4 c5xd4

5...♘xd4!? is an option that has yet to be fully evaluated: 6.♘xd4 ♕xd4. Compared to the analogous line in the **Réti**, which we will examine further ahead, (2...d4 3.e3) Black has a pawn on c5 and White has already advanced his pawn to g3: both lines have pro's and con's and it is difficult to say which is best.

6. d2-d3



The diagram shows a reverse Benoni. It is now wise for Black to avoid overly aggressive moves – as is the case when playing against a **King's Indian with reversed colours** – a.k.a. the KIA – and continue with moves such as 6...g6, which after 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.0-0 ♘f6 9.♖e1 0-0 10.a3 a5 11.♘bd2 ♘d7 creates a complex position that grants both sides chances.

It is worthwhile to consider

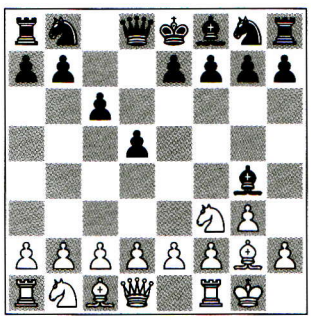
6. ... e7-e5
7. ♗f1-g2 ♘g8-f6
8. 0-0 ♘f6-d7
9. ♖f1-e1

It is not clear how much the extra move benefits White compared to the **Classical Variation** of the **Benoni**.

D6) 2. ... c7-c6

Supporting the centre and discouraging c2-c4, after which Black would take on c4 and follow up with ...b7-b5.

3. ♗f1-g2 ♗c8-g4
4. 0-0



4. ... ♘b8-d7

The reply 4...♘f6 transposes to Variation D71.

5. d2-d3 e7-e5!?

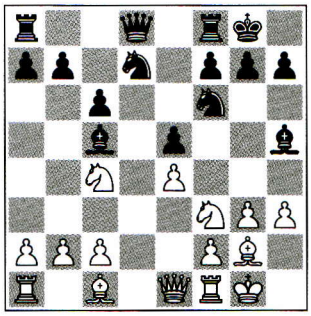
5...e6 followed by ...♗d6, after which ...♘e7 is an interesting continuation.

6. ♘b1-d2 ♘g8-f6
7. e2-e4 d5xe4

It is also possible to maintain the tension in the centre by playing 7...♗d6!?.

8. d3xe4 ♗f8-c5
9. h2-h3 ♗g4-h5
10. ♕d1-e1! 0-0
11. ♘d2-c4

with equal opportunities for both sides.



D7) 2. ... ♘g8-f6

A natural developing move.

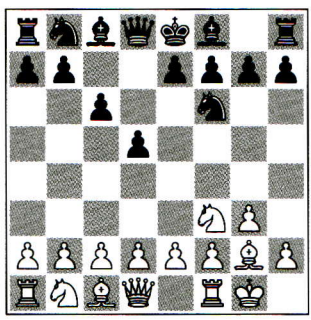
3. ♗f1-g2 c7-c6

This is the most popular move, which prepares the development of the c8 bishop. The following alternatives are also playable:

- 3...♗g4, along the lines of Variation D4;
- 3...e6, a solid move that will lead to a transposition;
- 3...♗f5, which establishes a reverse **London System**, and last of all:
- 3...g6, with a possible transposition to the **Fianchetto Variation** of the **Grünfeld**.

Now 4.c4, which transposes to the **Réti Opening**, is plausible. However, most players choose:

4. 0-0



Here we are at a major crossroads. We will now restrict ourselves to examin-

ing the lines in which White plays e2-e4 in **King's Indian Attack** fashion, given that the variations with c4 are by convention considered to be in the domain of the **Réti Opening**.

D71) 4. ... ♗c8-g4

Black is prepared to exchange off his light-squared bishop.

5. d2-d3

The solid 5.b3 is also worth considering.

5. ... ♘b8-d7

6. ♘b1-d2

The immediate 6.♕e1!? is of interest: 6...e5 7.e4 dxe4 8.dxe4 ♗c5 with a likely transposition to Variation D6.

6. ... e7-e5

More ambitious than the solid 6...e6, which is nonetheless often played: after 7.h3 ♗h5 (exchanging on f3 is too meek) 8.♕e1!? ♗e7 9.e4 White has achieved satisfactory results.

7. e2-e4 ♗f8-d6

Simplifying with 7...dxe4 achieves no more than equality.

8. h2-h3 ♗g4-h5

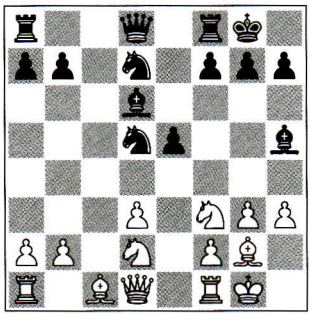
9. e4xd5!?

This offers more excitement than 9.♕e2 or 9.♕e1.

9. ... c6xd5

10. c2-c4! 0-0

11. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5



Now after either 12.♕b3 or 12.♘c4 White has a nice game: Black's h5 bishop is somewhat out of play and White has good activity on the central light squares in compensation for the weak d3 pawn.

D72) 4. ... ♗c8-f5

5. d2-d3

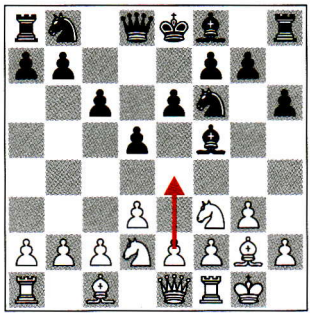
This is the normal move which prepares e2-e4. Another popular option is the solid 5.b3 e6 6.♗b2 ♗e7 7.d3 h6 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♖e1 ♗h7 10.e4 a5, and neither side is ahead.

5. ... e7-e6

6. ♘b1-d2 h7-h6

Vacating the h7-square for the bishop.

7. ♕d1-e1!?



At first sight this looks like an odd way to support e2-e4. However, it is most effective. Remember that ♕e8 in preparation for ...e7-e5 is a common theme in the analogous **King's Indian**.

After 7.♖e1 ♗e7, 8.e4 is not good as there is 8...dxe4 9.♘xe4 ♘xe4!.

7. ... ♗f8-e7

8. e2-e4 ♗f5-h7

9. ♘f3-e5

Sharper than the old 9.♕e2: the knight move prepares a probable advance of the f- and g-pawns.

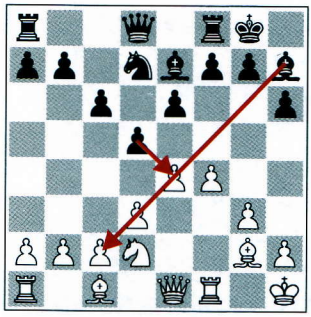
9. ... ♘b8-d7

It is a good idea to immediately challenge the e5 knight; 9...0-0 10.f4 gives White an unpleasant initiative.

10. ♘e5xd7

Playing 10.f4 now is open to question because of 10...♕b6+ 11.♔h1 ♘xe5 12.fxe5 ♘g4.

10. ... ♘f6xd7
11. f2-f4 0-0
12. ♔g1-h1



12. ... d5xe4!

Probably the best strategy. Black opens some lines in the centre, knowing that if the centre remains closed White would probably win a race on the opposing flanks.

13. d3xe4 ♘d7-c5!
14. ♕e1-e2 ♕d8-d7

The position is balanced.

Cocchi,Andrea
Brancaleoni,Maurizio
Montebelluna ch-ITA sf 2006 (6)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.b4 d5 3.♗b2 ♗g4 4.e3 ♘bd7 5.♗e2 ♗xf3 6.♗xf3 e5 7.a3 h5 8.c4 e4 9.♗e2 dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♗d6 11.d3 ♕e7 12.♘d2 exd3 13.♗xd3 ♘e5 14.♗e2 0-0-0 15.♕c2 ♔b8 16.♘e4 ♘xe4 17.♕xe4 f5 18.♕xf5 ♗xb4+ 19.♔f1 ♗d6 20.♕e4 ♖d7 21.♖b1 ♘g4 22.♕xe7 ♖xe7 23.h3 ♘f6 24.♗f3 b6 25.a4 ♗e5 26.♗a3 ♗d6 27.♗xd6 cxd6 28.a5 ♖c8 29.axb6 a5 30.♔e2 ♘e4 31.♗xe4 ♖xe4 32.♖hd1 ♖c6 33.♖d5 ♖e5 34.♖xe5 dxe5 35.♖b5 a4 36.♖a5 ♖c2+ 37.♔f3 e4+ 38.♔g3 h4+ 39.♔xh4 ♖xf2 40.g4 ♖a2 41.♖a7 ♖a3 42.♔g5 ♖xe3 43.♖xa4 ♖e1 44.♖a7 ♖h1 45.h4 e3 46.♖e7 ♖h3 47.h5 1-0

Conquest,Stuart
Jones,Gawain
Douglas ch-GBR 2005 (9)

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.g3 ♗g4 4.♗g2 ♗xf3 5.♗xf3 ♘f6 6.♗g5 e5 7.♘c3 ♘xd4 8.♗xd5 c6 9.♗g2 ♗e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗xf6 ♗xf6 12.e3 ♘e6 13.♕g4 ♕b6 14.♖ab1 g6 15.b4 ♗g7 16.♕c4 a6 17.a4 ♖fd8 18.h4 ♕c7 19.♗h3 ♖e8 20.♖fd1 b5 21.♕a2 f5 22.♘e4 ♕e7 23.♘c5 ♖a7 24.e4 ♕f7 25.♘xe6 ♖xe6 26.♖d8+ ♗f8 27.♖bd1 ♖f6 28.♕a1 ♖e7 29.axb5 axb5 30.♕a8 ♔g7 31.exf5 gxf5 32.♕c8 ♖c7 33.♕b8 ♗xb4 34.♖g8+ ♔h6 35.♖g5 ♗c5 36.♕d8 ♖e7 37.♔g2 ♗d4 38.♔h2 ♖d7 39.♕c8 ♖c7 40.♕d8 ♖d7 41.♕h8 b4 42.♖d2 ♖e7 43.♕b8 c5 44.♕b5 c4 45.♕xb4 f4 46.g4 ♖b6 47.♕a5 ♖g6 48.♖f5 ♕e8 49.g5+ ♔g7 50.h5 ♖d6 51.h6+ ♔h8 52.c3 ♗b6 53.♕a2 ♖d3 54.♖xd3 cxd3 55.♕d5 ♗xf2 56.♕xd3 ♕a8 57.♕a6 ♗g3+ 58.♔g1 ♕b8 59.♖xf4 exf4 60.♕f6+ ♔g8 61.♗e6+ 1-0

Grimm,Sascha
Khenkin,Igor
Hoogeveen 2004 (2)

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.0-0 e5 5.d3 ♘c6 6.♘bd2 ♘ge7 7.e4 0-0 8.a3 a5 9.♖b1 a4 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♖e1 h6 12.c4 ♘f6 13.b4 axb3 14.♖xb3 ♘d7 15.♖b5 ♖e8 16.♗b2 ♖a6 17.♘b3 ♘a7 18.♖d5 c6 19.♖xd7 ♗xd7 20.♘c5 ♖b6 21.♗xe5 ♗xe5 22.♘xe5 ♗f5 23.g4 ♗c8 24.d4 ♔g7 25.h3 ♖b2 26.♘f3 ♖xe1+ 27.♕xe1 ♕f6 28.♕e4 b6 29.♘d3 ♖b1+ 30.♔h2 ♖a1 31.♘fe5 ♖xa3 32.f4 b5 33.cxb5 ♘xb5 34.♘xc6 ♘d6 35.♕e2 ♗a6 36.♘ce5 ♗xd3 37.♘xd3 ♕xd4 38.♕e5+ ♕xe5 39.♘xe5 ♖e3 40.♘c6 ♘c4 41.♘b4 g5 42.♘d5 ♖d3 43.fxg5 hxg5 44.♘e7 ♔f6 45.♘f5 ♘d6 46.♘g3 ♔e5 47.♘h5 ♘c4 48.♗f1 ♖d2+ 49.♔g3 ♘e3 50.♗b5 ♖b2 51.♗c6 ♘f1+ 52.♔f3 ♖c2 53.♗e8 f6 54.♗g6 ♖c3+ 55.♔f2 ♘e3 56.♗f7 ♘c2 57.♘g3 ♘b4 58.♗g6 ♘d5 0-1

Hillarp Persson,Tiger
Khenkin,Igor
Malmö 2006 (4)

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.0-0 e5 5.d3 ♘c6 6.♘bd2 ♘ge7 7.c4 0-0 8.♖b1 a5 9.b3 h6 10.a3 ♗e6 11.cxd5 ♗xd5 12.♗b2 ♖e8 13.♖e1 ♘c8 14.e4 ♗e6 15.♘c4 a4 16.b4 ♘d6 17.♖c1 ♘b5 18.h4 ♘cd4 19.♘xd4 ♘xd4 20.♘a5 b6 21.♘c6 ♘xc6 22.♖xc6 ♗d7 23.♖c2 h5 24.♗c1 ♗b5 25.♗f1 ♖e6 26.d4 ♗xf1 27.d5 ♖d6 28.♔xf1 ♕d7 29.♗e3 f5 30.exf5 gxf5 31.♕xh5 f4 32.gxf4 exf4 33.♗xf4 ♖xd5 34.♕g6 ♕h3+ 35.♔g1 ♕xh4 36.♕e6+ ♔h8 37.♕xd5 ♕xf4 38.♕xa8+ 1-0

Dizdarevic,Emir
Pavasovic,Dusko
Istanbul Ech 2003 (4)

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 ♗g4 3.♗g2 ♘d7 4.c4 e6 5.♕b3 ♘c5 6.♕c2 c6 7.d3 ♘f6 8.♘bd2 ♗e7 9.b3 0-0 10.♗b2 a5 11.a3 ♕b8 12.0-0 b5 13.h3 ♗h5 14.g4 ♗g6 15.♘e5 ♖c8 16.♖ab1 ♘cd7 17.♘xg6 hxg6 18.e3 ♗d6 19.d4 a4 20.c5 axb3 21.♘xb3 ♗h2+ 22.♔h1 g5 23.♘c1 ♖a4 24.♘d3 ♗c7 25.♖a1 ♘f8 26.♗c3 ♕a7 27.♗b4 ♘g6 28.♖fb1 ♗b8 29.f3 ♕c7 30.♔g1 ♕h2+ 31.♔f1 e5 32.♖a2 exd4 33.exd4 ♗g3 34.♗c3 ♖e8 35.♖b4 ♖a7 36.a4 bxa4 37.♖bxa4 ♖ae7 38.♖a8 ♗f4 39.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 40.♘xf4 ♘xf4 41.♕f2 ♘xh3 42.♗xh3 ♕h1+ 0-1

Musat,Adrian
Atalik,Suat
Sovata tt 2003 (2)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.d3 c5 4.e3 ♘c6 5.exd4 cxd4 6.g3 g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.0-0 ♘f6 9.♘a3 0-0 10.♘c2 a5 11.b3 e5 12.♘g5 ♖e8 13.♖e1 h6 14.♘e4 ♘xe4 15.♗xe4 ♗e6 16.♖b1 ♕d7 17.♗d2 ♗f5 18.♗xf5 ♕xf5 19.♕e2 ♕d7 20.f3 f5 21.♕g2 ♔h7 22.♖e2 ♘d8 23.♖be1 ♘f7 24.♗c1 ♖a6 25.♗b2 ♖ae6 26.♘a3 ♗f8 27.♘b5 ♗b4 28.♖f1 ♗c5 29.♔h1 ♘g5 30.♗c1 ♘f7 31.♗d2 b6 32.♖fe1 h5 33.♖f1 ♔g7 34.♖fe1 ♖8e7 35.a3 ♘d6 36.b4 axb4 37.axb4 ♘xb5 38.bxc5 ♘c3 39.♗xc3 dxc3 40.f4 e4 41.dxe4 ♖xe4 0-1

Zviagintsev,Vadim
Bareev,Evgeny
Sochi tt 2005 (3)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.g3 c5 4.e3 ♘c6 5.exd4 cxd4 6.♗g2 e5 7.0-0 ♘f6 8.d3 ♗d6 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗xf6 ♕xf6 11.♘bd2 ♕e7 12.a3 ♗f5 13.♕e2 0-0 14.b4 ♖fe8 15.♘h4 ♗e6 16.♘e4 g5 17.♕h5 ♔g7 18.f4 exf4 19.gxf4 ♗xf4 20.♖xf4 gxf4 21.b5 ♘d8 22.♖f1 ♕c7 23.c5 ♖g8 24.♘d6 ♔f8 25.♔h1 ♔e7 26.♕e5 ♖g5 27.♘hf5+ ♔d7 28.♗xb7 1-0

Campora,Daniel
Korneev,Oleg
Coria del Rio open 2005 (8)

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 c6 3.♗g2 ♗g4 4.0-0 ♘d7 5.d3 ♘gf6 6.c4 dxc4 7.dxc4 e5 8.♘c3 ♗c5 9.♕c2 ♕e7 10.♘a4 ♗d6 11.h3 ♗h5 12.♘h4 ♗g6 13.♘xg6 hxg6 14.♗g5 ♘c5 15.♘xc5 ♗xc5 16.a3 ♕e6 17.b4 ♘h7 18.♗d2 ♗e7 19.♖ad1 ♘g5 20.♗xg5 ♗xg5 21.e4 ♖d8 22.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 23.♖d1 0-0 24.c5 ♗c7 25.♗f1 ♖d8 26.♔g2 ♖xd1 27.♕xd1 b6 28.♕a4 a5 29.bxa5 bxa5 30.♕c4 ♕f6 31.♕a6 ♗b8 32.♕xa5 ♕e7 33.♕b6 ♗a7 34.♕xc6 ♗xc5 35.a4 g5 36.♗c4 ♗d4 37.a5 ♔h7 38.a6 ♗a7 39.♕b7 ♕xb7 40.axb7 ♔g8 41.♔f3 ♔f8 42.♔g4 f6 43.♔f5 ♔e7 44.♔g6 ♔f8 45.h4 gxh4 46.gxh4 ♗b8 47.h5 ♗c7 48.♗f7 ♗b8 49.h6 gxh6 50.♔xf6 ♗c7 51.♗g6 ♗b8 52.♗h5 ♗c7 53.♔e6 ♔g7 54.♔d7 ♗b8 55.♔c8 ♗d6 56.b8♕ ♗xb8 57.♔xb8 ♔f6 58.♔c7 ♔g5 59.♗f3 ♔f4 60.♗g2 h5 61.♔d6 h4 62.♔d5 1-0

Jansa,Vlastimil
Navara,David
Karlovy Vary ch-CZE 2004 (4)

1.g3 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.0-0 ♗g4 5.b3 e6 6.♗b2 ♘bd7 7.c4 ♗d6 8.d4 0-0 9.♘bd2 h6 10.♖e1 ♗f5 11.♘h4 ♗h7 12.e4 dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 ♗xe4 15.♖xe4 b5 16.♖c1 bxc4 17.♖xc4 ♖c8 18.♘f3 ♕a5 19.♖a4 ♕c7 20.♖c4 ♖fd8 21.♕e2 ♘f6 22.♖h4 ♗f8 23.♘e5 ♕b7 24.♕f3 ♖d5 25.♖f4 ♖c7 26.♘d3 ♕a6 27.a4 ♕b6 28.♘c5 ♖c8 29.b4 ♕c7 30.♖c1 ♖dd8 31.♖xf6 gxf6 32.♘e4 ♗g7 33.d5 f5 34.♗xg7 fxe4 35.♕f6 ♖xd5 36.♕xh6 f6 37.♕h8+ ♔f7 38.♕h7 e5 39.♗h6+ ♔e6 40.♕xe4 ♕d7 41.♕g4+ ♔e7 42.♕g7+ ♔e6 43.♕g4+ ♔e7 44.♕g7+ ½-½

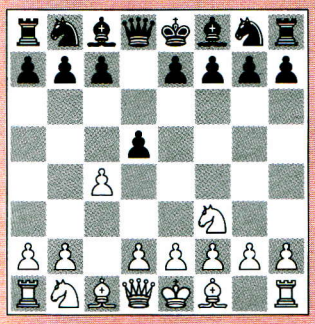
Kortchnoi,Viktor
Djurasevic,Bozidar
Belgrade YUG-URS 1961 (3)

1.g3 ♘f6 2.♗g2 d5 3.♘f3 c6 4.0-0 ♗f5 5.d3 e6 6.♕e1 ♗e7 7.♘c3 ♘fd7 8.e4 ♗g6 9.♗f4 d4 10.♘e2 c5 11.b4 f6 12.e5 ♘c6 13.exf6 gxf6 14.bxc5 ♘xc5 15.♗h6 ♕d7 16.♖b1 e5 17.♘d2 ♗f8 18.♗xf8 ♔xf8 19.f4 ♔g7 20.♗xc6 ♕xc6 21.fxe5 fxe5 22.♘xd4 exd4 23.♕e7+ ♔g8 24.♖f6 ♖e8 25.♖xc6 ♖xe7 26.♖xc5 ♔g7 27.♘b3 ♖d8 28.♖c4 b5 29.♖b4 a5 30.♖xb5 ♖e2 31.♖c5 ♗f7 32.♖f1 ♗d5 33.♖f4 ♖g2+ 34.♔f1 ♖xh2 35.♘xd4 ♗xa2 36.♔g1 ♖d2 37.♖xa5 ♗g8 38.♖g5+ ♔h8 39.♖e5 ♖a8 40.♖e2 ♖d1+ 41.♖f1 ♖aa1 42.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 43.♔f2 ♔g7 44.♖e1 1-0

Kortchnoi,Viktor
Karpov,Anatoly
Tilburg 1986 (10)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 c6 4.0-0 ♗f5 5.d3 e6 6.c4 dxc4 7.dxc4 ♕xd1 8.♖xd1 ♘bd7 9.♘c3 h6 10.h3 ♗c2 11.♖e1 ♗h7 12.♗e3 ♗b4 13.♖ec1 0-0 14.♘a4 ♗e7 15.♘d2 ♖fd8 16.♘b3 ♗e4 17.♘a5 ♗xg2 18.♔xg2 ♖ab8 19.a3 ♖dc8 20.b4 b6 21.♘b3 c5 22.bxc5 bxc5 23.♖ab1 ♖c6 24.♗f4 ♖bc8 25.♘c3 ♖a6 26.♘b5 ♖a4 27.♘d2 g5 28.♗e3 a6 29.♘c3 ♖xa3 30.♘de4 ♖c7 31.♘d2 ♘e8 32.♖c2 ♘d6 33.g4 ♗f6 34.♘ce4 ♘xe4 35.♘xe4 ♗e5 36.♖d2 ♔g7 37.♖bd1 ♘f6 38.♘d6 ♖b3 39.♖a2 ♖b6 40.♖ad2 ♖cc6 0-1

Réti Opening
1.♘g1-f3 d7-d5 2.c2-c4



After 1...d5, White can immediately apply pressure to the centre with 2.c4.
Made popular by the Bohemian Richard Réti in the early 1920's, it really came into its own after it was employed to defeat Capablanca in New York in 1924. In that game the actual move sequence was 1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4. However, what counts is the idea behind the moves: White does not physically occupy the centre but instead seeks to exert distant control with the hope of undermining Black's centre later on. This concept is part and parcel of any modern player's technical repertoire; yet 80 years ago it must have seemed revolutionary.

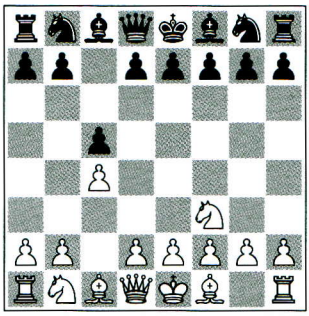
Black can choose from four principal replies. Please note that the last two are the most popular and are classified by the ECO as being part of the **English 1...c6** and the **English 1...e6** respectively. However, we have discussed them here because their themes are consistent with the Réti.

Transpositions arising from 1.♘f3 and 1.c4 (with the possibility of entering a **Queen's Pawn Game** true and proper) make classification difficult, which is indeed why these moves are so attractive and increasingly popular.

Kramnik's repertoire

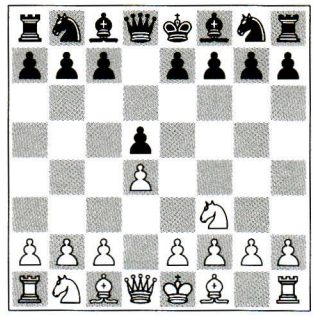
Here is a nice opportunity to look at an interesting example of a highly transpositional repertoire; it was employed by the young Vladimir Kramnik, who used to like opening the game with the move **1.♘f3**, but who would transpose to **1.d4** or **1.c4** openings depending on the circumstances.

Let's have a look in more detail.
Moving the king's knight out on the first move stops Black's ...e7-e5; we can safely presume that Kramnik did not like the idea of playing against the **1...e5 defences** that he would encounter after 1.c4. However, he was happy to play a **Symmetrical English** with **1...c5 2.c4**.



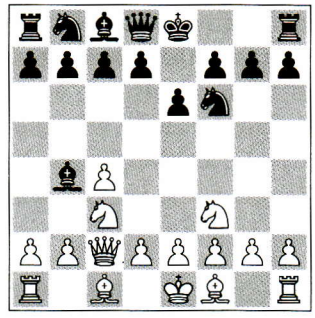
And in the event of **1...♘f6**, we usually see **2.c4 c5**.

Kramnik's preferred reply to **1...d5** was **2.d4**



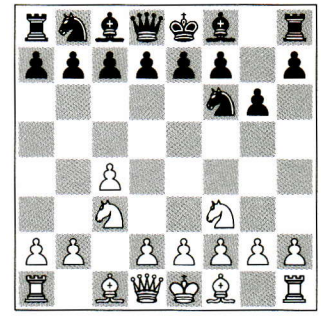
often followed by c2-c4 and a transposition to the **Queen's Gambit**.

If Black continued along the lines of the **Nimzo-/Queen's Indian** with **1...♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4** (3...b6 4.e4, though playable, has given White nice results), after **4.♕c2**



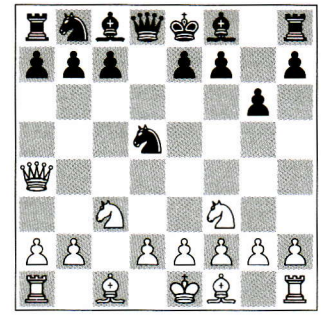
Kramnik was in a line of the **English** which is considered to be more promising for White than the analogous variation in the **Nimzo-Indian**.

If, on the other hand, Black shows aggressive ambitions with **2...g6**, the former World Champion was prepared to play against a normal **King's Indian** with **3.♘c3**.



3...♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4.

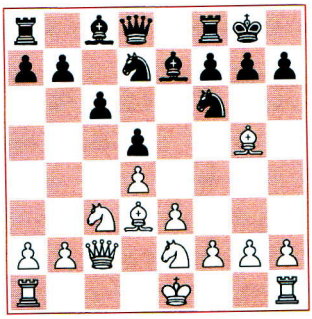
When faced with **3...d5** he preferred to adopt an interesting **Anti-Grünfeld** line with **4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♕a4+**.



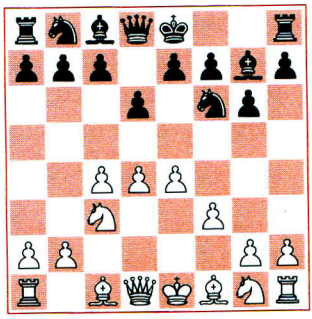
As you can see, this is an appealing method; it is true that it often leads to a **Queen's Pawn Game**, but at the same time you avoid three of the most aggressive and unpleasant defences to 1.d4, namely the **Benoni**, the **Benko** and the **Grünfeld**.

Specialists in these defences have frequently displayed a certain discomfort when faced with this approach. For example, the Scottish grandmaster Jonathan Rowson, a noted expert on the **Grünfeld**, has confessed to having problems when facing 1.♘f3, and since this admission his adversaries have chosen to play it more and more often!

Naturally, this does not imply that 1.♘f3 is better than 1.d4; as always, it is a question of style and taste.
With Kramnik's repertoire you run less risk than when you open with 1.d4, but the price for this is that White has fewer options after 1.♘f3.
For example, it is no longer possible to play the promising line with ♘ge2 (much feared by many a black player) in the **Karlsbad Variation** of the **Queen's Gambit**.

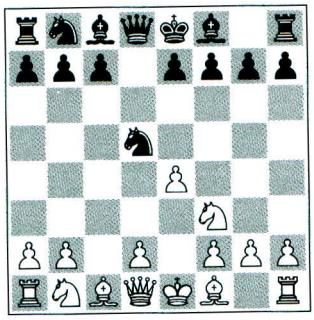


Another attractive line that is excluded is the **Sämisch** against the **King's Indian**.



All of the above is yet another reminder that the various openings are not always separate entities, and to have an awareness of possible transpositions can be very useful when selecting the repertoire best suited to your individual needs.

We will now have a look at the specifics of the **Réti Opening**.
In addition to the four alternatives that we are about to examine, there is the dubious *2...♘f6, which is curiously common at lower levels. After 3.cxd5 ♘xd5 4.e4*



(or 4.d4) there is no knight on c3 to capture, and White conquers the centre without having to worry about the typical counterplay that Black has with the Grünfeld and the Semi-Tarrasch.

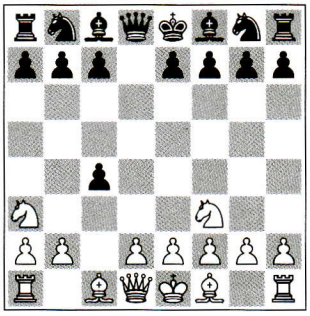
Réti Accepted

1. ♘g1-f3 d7-d5
2. c2-c4 d5xc4

In **Queen's Gambit Accepted fashion**, and indeed there is often a transposition after 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♗xc4 e6 5.d4.
The following is playable but risky: 3.g3 c6 4.♗g2 ♘f6 5.♕c2!, transposing to Variation B31.
3.e4 is another line which is positionally controversial: after 3...c5 4.♗xc4 ♘c6 5.0-0 e6 6.♘c3 a6 7.d3, it is open

to debate if the lead in development compensates for the hole on d4.

3. ♘b1-a3



Simultaneously stopping ...b7-b5 and threatening to take the c4 pawn.

3. ... e7-e5!?

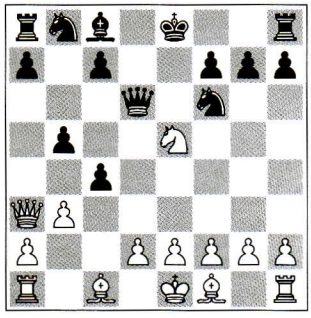
An aggressive approach made possible by a tactical motif.

The quieter 3...c5 4.♘xc4 ♘c6 5.g3 f6! 6.♗g2 e5 7.d3 only gives White a tiny plus; nonetheless, most Réti players seem to enjoy playing this line.

4. ♘f3xe5 ♗f8xa3

And now you see the tactical idea behind 3...e5: *if 5.bxa3??, ♕d4 attacks both the rook on a1 and the knight on e5.* However, White has

5. ♕d1-a4+! b7-b5
6. ♕a4xa3 ♘g8-f6
7. b2-b3!? ♕d8-d6!



8. ♕a3xd6

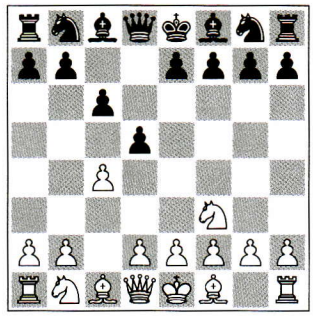
8.♗b2? would lose a piece after the elegant 8...c3!!.

8. ... c7xd6
9. ♘e5-f3

with a position that is not easy to weigh up, but which nonetheless appears to be slightly in White's favour.

Slav Formation

1. ♘g1-f3 d7-d5
2. c2-c4 c7-c6



In the spirit of the Slav, Black supports the d5 pawn with the intention of safely developing his c8 bishop.

In addition to 3.d4, which transposes to the **Slav Defence** (examined in Volume 2 of our series), White has three other options:

A) 3. b2-b3

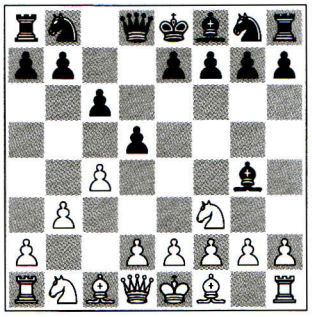
Prudently defending c4, but

3. ... ♗c8-g4!

will hinder White's thematic kingside fianchetto.

Now, neither 4.♗b2 nor 4.g3 is a problem for Black as he can play 4...♗xf3!.

Also 4.♘e5 gives White nothing: 4...♗h5 5.♗b2 ♘d7.



4. e2-e3 e7-e6

4...e5 looks aggressive, but after 5.h3 Black is obliged to concede the bishop pair, leaving Black's centre open to attack.

Given that the g4 bishop is likely to be exchanged off, it is strategically wise for Black to place his pawns on light squares.

5. ♗c1-b2 ♘g8-f6
6. ♗f1-e2 ♘b8-d7
7. 0-0 ♗f8-d6
8. ♘b1-c3 a7-a6

To prevent any intrusion on b5 after cxd5 / cxd5.

9. h2-h3 ♗g4-h5
10. d2-d3 0-0

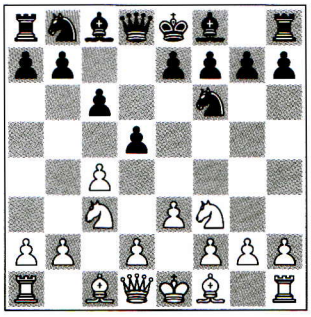
and Black should be pleased with his position.

B) 3. e2-e3

This line contains some venom as White keeps open his options in regard to a possible d4 advance and a resulting transposition to the **Queen's Pawn Game**.

3. ... ♘g8-f6
4. ♘b1-c3

White has already succeeded in preventing Black from playing a normal **Slav**.

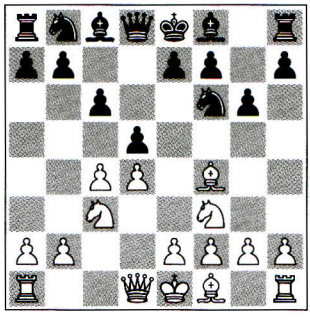


Indeed 4...dxc4?! does not make much sense as White can recapture on c4 and does not have to weaken his queenside with the a2-a4 advance, as is the case in the Slav.

In addition, the development of the bishop to f5 or g4 by Black now would allow the annoying ♕b3. Therefore Black in effect has three lines to choose from:

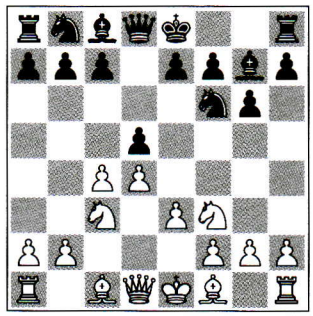
B1) 4. ... g7-g6

This imposes a hybrid **Slav/Grünfeld**, which is probably playable. It is worth noting that the analogous **Schlechter Variation** in the **Slav** – 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 g6?! – is considered dubious because of 5.♗f4.



However, here White has already played e3, and thus he cannot deploy his bishop on the kingside. Black's set-up is solid but a tad passive.

Indeed, in the **Grünfeld** after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.e3,

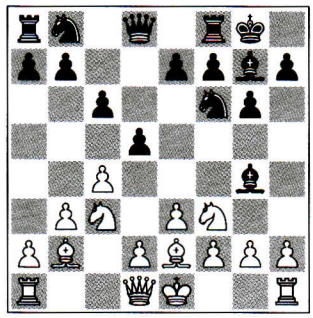


it is rare that Black plays 5...c6, which would establish the set-up in question, but rather he prepares ...c7-c5.

5. b2-b3!?

Another nice move is **5.d4** which transposes to the previously mentioned **Grünfeld** line.

5. ... ♗f8-g7
6. ♗c1-b2 0-0
7. ♗f1-e2 ♗c8-g4



Black has achieved equality, but the 60% draw rate is not encouraging for a more ambitious black player who would like more than the half point.

B2) 4. ... e7-e6

This move, which points Black towards a Meran, is the most played option.

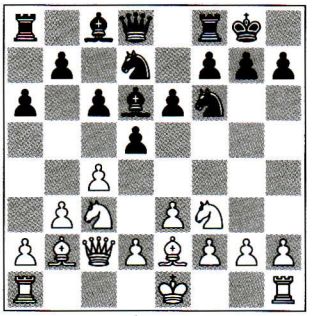
5. b2-b3

5.d4 ♘bd7 transposes to the **Meran Defence**, which is examined in Vol.2.

5. ... ♘b8-d7
6. ♗c1-b2 ♗f8-d6
7. ♕d1-c2 0-0
8. ♗f1-e2

Pushing the d pawn two squares takes us into the **Anti-Meran** with **♕c2**.

8. ... a7-a6



At this point, if White is not thrilled by the prospect of the slow positional play that would follow after d2-d4, he could think about trying the curious 9.♖g1!?, with the idea of g4-g5 and queenside castling!

Don't always believe generalizations; remember that there is more room for interpretation in an opening than you would imagine, which is verified when we see castling on opposite wings in the normally staid Réti!

B3) 4. ... a7-a6

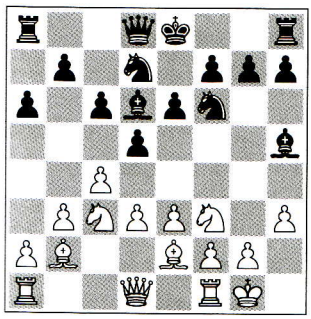
This flexible move is a very fashionable line in the Slav, and therefore also here.

5. b2-b3 ♗c8-g4

Particularly natural to play this now that White no longer has ♕b3 available to him.

6. ♗f1-e2 e7-e6
7. ♗c1-b2 ♘b8-d7
8. 0-0 ♗f8-d6
9. h2-h3 ♗g4-h5
10. d2-d3!?

The move for those who do not want to transpose to a **Queen's Pawn Game** with 10.d4.



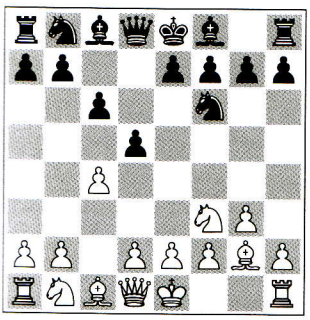
10. ... 0-0

with a fairly balanced position.

C) 3. g2-g3!?

The move most in keeping with the spirit of the **Réti Opening**. However, as always when Black has a pawn on c6, this may involve sacrificing the c4 pawn.

3. ... ♘g8-f6
4. ♗f1-g2



C1) 4. ... d5xc4!?
5. ♕d1-c2!

Probably the best; after 5.0-0 ♘bd7 6.♕c2 ♘b6 7.♘a3 ♕d5 8.♘h4 ♕d4!, White will have difficulty winning back the pawn.

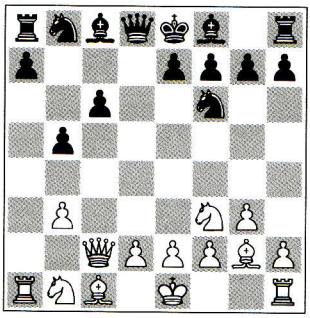
5. ... b7-b5

5...♘bd7 6.♘a3 b5 7.b3! cxb3 8.♕xc6 is good for White.

6. b2-b3!?

Now the line becomes a true gambit.

6. ... c4xb3
7. a2xb3



7. ... ♗c8-b7
8. ♗c1-a3 g7-g6
9. 0-0 ♗f8-g7
10. d2-d4

As always in this type of position, it is no easy matter to evaluate the exact level of compensation, but it is significant that – contrary to what you would expect – the latest chess engines give White an advantage, albeit slight.

C2) 4. ... e7-e6

This will be discussed in the section on the **Orthodox Formation**.

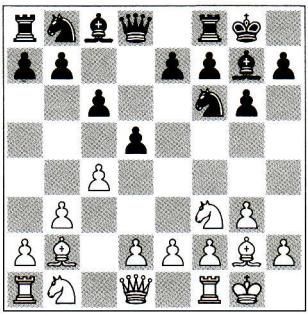
C3) 4. ... g7-g6

Again another interesting **Slav/Grünfeld** hybrid.

5. b2-b3

5.0-0 ♗g7 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.d4 transposes to the **Fianchetto Variation** of the **Grünfeld**.

5. ... ♗f8-g7
6. ♗c1-b2 0-0
7. 0-0



Theory states that both 7...♗g4 8.d3 and 7...a5 8.d3 a4 9.♘bd2 result in equality, but this is a strange verdict in the light of White's optimum 60% performance with these lines.

C4) 4. ... ♗c8-g4
5. ♘f3-e5

After 5.cxd5 ♗xf3! 6.♗xf3 cxd5 7.♘c3 e6 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.d3 ♗e7, Black has a solid position and the advantage of having the bishop pair seems to be of only academic value for White.

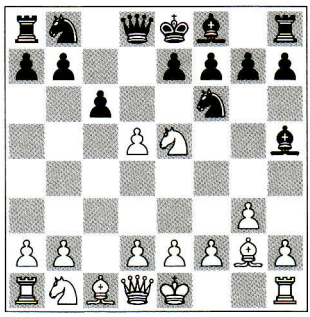
5.♕c2 is worth a look: 5...♘bd7 6.d3 dxc4! 7.dxc4 e6 8.0-0, and both sides have their chances.

5. ... ♗g4-h5

The alternative 5...♗f5?! is dubious: 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♘c3 e6 8.♕a4+ ♘bd7 9.g4! ♗g6 10.h4, and White is doing better.

More interesting is 5...♗e6!? 6.cxd5 ♗xd5 7.♘f3 c5 8.♘c3 ♗c6 9.0-0 e6, and Black has a playable game despite being a little behind in development.

6. c4xd5



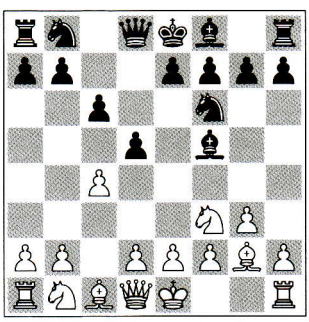
6. ... ♘f6xd5!?

6...cxd5 7.♘c3 e6 8.♕a4+ ♘bd7 9.g4 ♗g6 10.h4 transposes to the 5...♗f5 line.

7. d2-d4 ♘b8-d7
8. ♘e5-d3 ♕d8-b6
9. ♘b1-c3! e7-e6
10. ♕d1-a4

with an edge for White, but a position this complex also gives Black opportunities.

C5) 4. ... ♗c8-f5



A natural developing move.

At this point White has two options if we exclude 5.0-0 e6 6.d3 dxc4 7.dxc4 ♕xd1 8.♖xd1, which produces a barren position.

C51) 5. b2-b3

The classical continuation.

5. ... e7-e6
6. ♗c1-b2 ♘b8-d7
7. 0-0 h7-h6

Vacating the h7-square for the bishop.

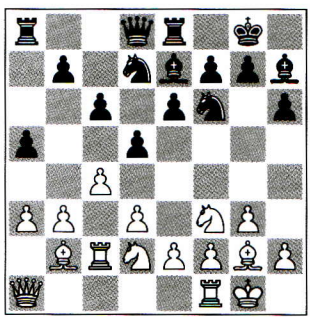
8. d2-d3 ♗f8-e7

After the seemingly more active 8...♗c5, we have 9.♘bd2 0-0 10.a3 a5 11.♖a2! ♕e7 12.♕a1 ♗h7 13.♗c3 White prepares b2-b4, with a somewhat irritating initiative on the queenside.

9. ♘b1-d2 0-0
10. a2-a3 a7-a5
11. ♖a1-c1

Otherwise 11.♕c2 ♗h7 12.♗c3 to support the b3-b4 advance.

11. ... ♗f5-h7
12. ♖c1-c2 ♖f8-e8
13. ♕d1-a1



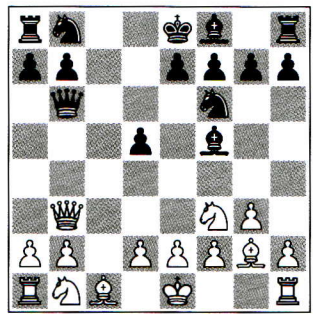
13. ... ♗e7-f8
14. ♖f1-c1

It is hard to identify any objective advantage for White here; nonetheless **Réti** players love these type of positions, and as they usually are more familiar with them they are often able to generate a concrete advantage... one only has to think of the famous Capablanca-Lilienthal game played in Moscow in 1936.

C52) 5. c4xd5

The modern continuation.

5. ... c6xd5
6. ♕d1-b3 ♕d8-b6



Black is not concerned about doubling his b pawns.

The 'beginner's' move 6...b6 is not mentioned in some books, not even in criticism. While it is true that the weakening of the light squares that this move creates is not a pleasant sight, the fact that no chess engine is able to come up with a line that gives White a convincing advantage makes you wonder how bad the move actually is.

6...♕c8 is the best choice for a player who does not like to simplify, even if after 7.♘c3 e6 8.d3 ♘c6 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♗f4 0-0 11.♖ac1, White is a little better.

It is also no easy matter for White to gain any demonstrable advantage after the paradoxical 6...♗c8.

7. ♕b3xb6

White can now accept doubled pawns with 7.♘c3!? ♕xb3 8.axb3 ♘c6 9.d3, and now it is difficult to say to what extent White's piece activity compensates for his compromised pawn structure.

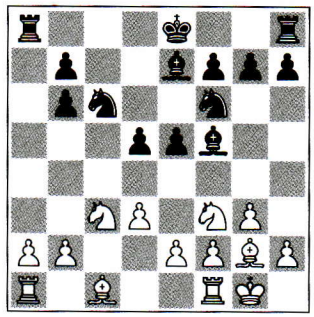
7. ... a7xb6

Now it is for Black to justify his decision to accept doubled pawns.

8. ♘b1-c3 ♘b8-c6
9. d2-d3 e7-e5

After 9...e6 10.♘b5!? ♗b4+ 11.♗d2 ♔e7 12.♘fd4 ♗xd2+ 13.♔xd2 ♗g6 14.f4, White's advantage is minimal.

10. 0-0 ♗f8-e7

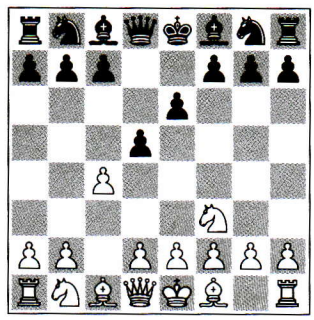


The position appears to be balanced.

Orthodox Formation

1. ♘g1-f3 d7-d5
2. c2-c4 e7-e6

This formation is similar to that of the **Orthodox Defence**.



This move is much played, and is a favourite of those who have the **Tartakower** or **Orthodox Variation** in their repertoire (see Volume 2).

At this stage White can fianchetto on one or both sides of the board, which can lead to transpositions that are challenging to handle. In Variation C1 we will examine lines where White fianchettoes on the queenside only (b3, ♗b2, e3 and ♗e2) or on both wings (b3, ♗b2, g3 and ♗g2), whereas in Variation C2 we see only a kingside fianchetto.

Remember that 3.d4 transposes to a **Queen's Gambit**.

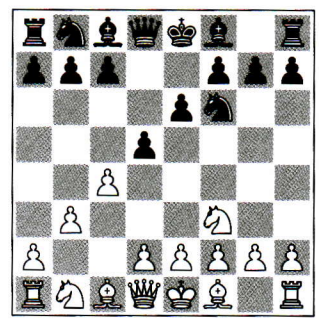
A) 3. b2-b3

Protecting c4 and preparing the fianchetto of the c1 bishop. The other bishop can also be developed with a fianchetto or otherwise go to e2.

This line looks modest, but appearances can be deceptive. It is true that White is not seeking to obtain an immediate advantage, but rather to gain a plus in the strategically complex middlegame position that he is establishing.

It is no coincidence that Kasparov chose this very set-up in the crucial last game of his 1987 match against Karpov, which he had to win in order to keep his title.

3. ... ♘g8-f6



Both the most natural and the most popular move. However, 3...♗e7 deserves more attention, given its optimum results: 4.♗b2 ♗f6!?.

A1) 4. e2-e3

This can also be played one move later.

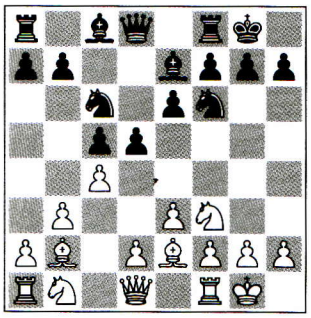
4. ... ♗f8-e7
5. ♗c1-b2 0-0
6. ♗f1-e2

More elastic than 6.♘c3 c5! with a decent game for Black.

6. ... c7-c5

A popular alternative is 6...b6 7.0-0 ♗b7 8.♘c3 c5 9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.d4 ♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♘c6, with equality.

7. 0-0 ♘b8-c6



This is a common position that is often reached by a variety of different move orders.

8. c4xd5

This is more in keeping with the opening's philosophy than the d2-d4 push, even if this is a perfectly playable and popular alternative.

8. ... ♘f6xd5

Leaving the centre more fluid. 8...exd5!? transposes to the Tarrasch Defence, which, needless to say, is a perfectly playable alternative that presumes Black is willing to accept all the pluses and minuses of hanging pawns on c5 and d5 or an isolated pawn on d5.

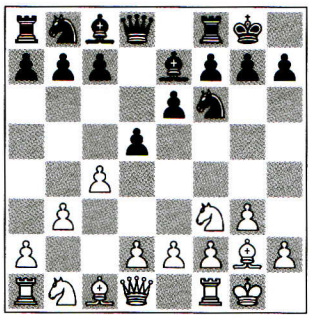
9. a2-a3!?

White is playing something like a reverse Kan Sicilian: after 9.d4 ♗f6, Black should have few problems.

9. ... b7-b6
10. d2-d3 ♗c8-b7
11. ♘b1-d2 ♗e7-f6
12. ♕d1-c2

Though this position may be objectively equal, it is sufficiently complex to offer both players chances.

A2) 4. g2-g3 ♗f8-e7
5. ♗f1-g2 0-0
6. 0-0



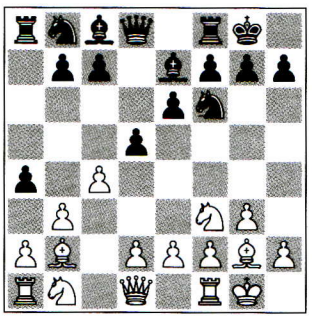
A21) 6. ... a7-a5!?

With the clear intention of marching on to a4.

7. ♗c1-b2

White ignores the 'threat'; indeed 7.♘c3 d4! 8.♘b5 ♘c6 9.♗b2 e5 looks great for Black.

7. ... a5-a4



8. ♘b1-a3!?

It is also possible to play 8.d3 first. *However, the move 8.♘c3?! is weak due to 8...a3 9.♗c1 d4, with a plus for Black.*

8. ... c7-c6
9. d2-d3 ♘b8-d7
10. ♕d1-c2 ♕d8-b6
11. ♖f1-b1

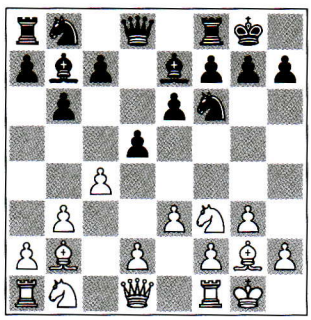
It is a challenge to work out who has the initiative on the queenside, but one thing is for sure: anything could happen.

Though it may be true that White has lost the advantage of the first move, it is also true that most Réti players are going to feel comfortable playing this type of position.

A22) 6. ... b7-b6

A natural move that contributes to development.

7. ♗c1-b2 ♗c8-b7
8. e2-e3



Easily the most popular move: it is important to control the d4-square.

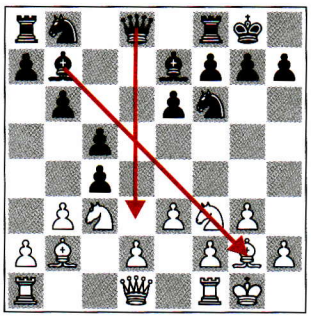
8. ... c7-c5

A less effective alternative is 8...♘bd7 9.♘c3 ♘e4 10.♘e2!?, as in the previously mentioned Kasparov-Karpov game played in Seville 1987.

9. ♘b1-c3

It is also worth considering 9.♕e2 followed by ♖d1.

9. ... d5xc4!?



This idea was initially greeted with scepticism, however this modern recipe is an ever more popular alternative to the standard 9...♘c6 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xd5 ♕xd5 12.d4 ♕d8 13.dxc5!, which leaves White with an edge.

10. b3xc4 ♘b8-c6

Black has conceded White a central pawn majority in exchange for free piece play.

A good idea? Probably yes. This is also the notion behind the **Open Sicilian** (3.d4). However, there it is White who gives Black a pawn majority in the centre in exchange for dynamic play. Even if there are a few who have dogmatically declared the Open Sicilian to be unsound!

11. ♕d1-e2 ♕d8-c7
12. ♖f1-d1 ♖f8-d8
13. ♖a1-c1 a7-a6

White is ready to take physical control of the centre, which is exactly where Black hopes to strike back. As a result, we have a tense position that supplies both sides with their fair share of possibilities.

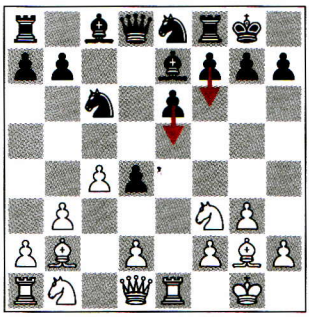
A23) 6. ... c7-c5
7. ♗c1-b2 ♘b8-c6
8. e2-e3

The other option is 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♘c3 ♗f6 10.♖c1 b6, but this does not give White more than equality.

8. ... d5-d4!?

An ambitious move that creates a type of reverse Benoni. The solid 8...b6 transposes to the preceding line A22.

9. e3xd4 c5xd4
10. ♖f1-e1 ♘f6-e8!

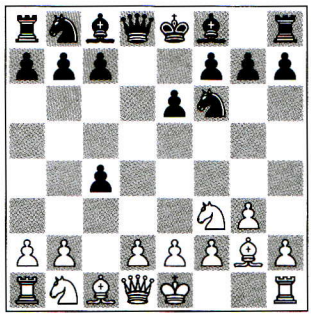


Preparing ...f7-f6 and ...e6-e5.

11. d2-d3 f7-f6
12. ♘b1-a3 e6-e5
13. ♘a3-c2 ♘e8-c7
14. a2-a3 a7-a5

The strategic themes are the same as those that typify the **Benoni** (but here played with the white pieces): White will prepare b3-b4 and queenside play, whereas Black will focus his attention on the centre and the kingside. These are positions that are relatively unexplored, and more than most positions they will favour the stronger player due to their strategic and tactical complexity.

B) 3. g2-g3 ♘g8-f6
4. ♗f1-g2 d5xc4



If Black, as in the **Closed Catalan**, does not take the c4 pawn and continues to develop with 4...♗e7 5.0-0 0-0, White can play 6.d4 and transpose to the **Catalan**, or otherwise he can chose 6.b3 and enter Variation A2.

5. ♕d1-c2!?

The variation 5.♕a4+ ♘bd7!? 6.♕xc4 c5 7.0-0 b6 has scored very well indeed for Black.

The idea of the text move is to keep open the possibility of recapturing on c4 with the knight by means of ♘b1-a3xc4 or ♘f3-e5xc4.

Indeed, an immediate 5.♘e5?! would allow 5...♕d4! and Black has a satisfactory game.

Also 5.♘a3 ♗xa3 6.bxa3 0-0 7.♕c2 ♘c6! does not look very convincing either.

5. ... ♘b8-d7

Another possibility is 5...a6 6.♘e5 ♘d5 7.♘xc4 b5 8.♘e3 ♗b7 9.0-0 ♘xe3 10.dxe3 ♗xg2 11.♔xg2; Black's queenside weaknesses do not appear to be particularly significant and the position is balanced.

6. ♘b1-a3!?

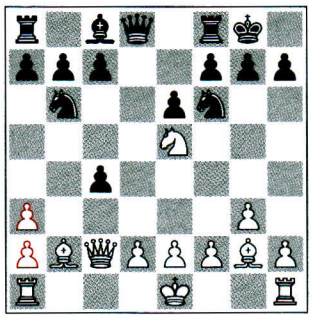
6.♕xc4 c5 7.0-0 b6 transposes to the 5.♕a4+ line, while after 6.0-0 ♘b6! 7.a4 a5, White may find it problematic to win back the pawn.

6. ... **♗f8xa3**

Black is prepared to concede the dark-squared bishop in order to severely compromise White's pawn structure.

The alternative 6...c5 7.♘xc4 b5 8.♘ce5 ♘d5 9.a4 gives White the edge.

7. b2xa3 **♘d7-b6**
8. ♘f3-e5 **0-0**
9. ♗c1-b2



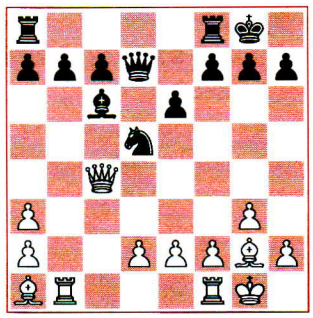
White easily wins back the pawn but the doubled a-pawns auger an awful endgame.

However, White has not forgotten Tarrasch's wise words, "before the endgame, the Gods have placed the middlegame", and White now starts to play his trumps.

His compensation on the long dark-squared diagonal is evident yet difficult to quantify: the chess engines see the position as equal.

A continuation which is no more than indicative is:

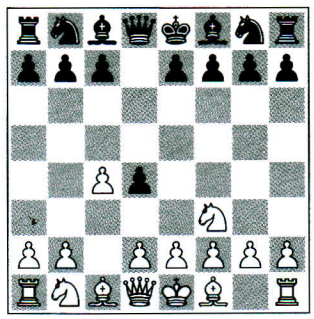
9. ... **♘f6-d5**
10. ♘e5xc4 **♘b6xc4**
11. ♕c2xc4 **♗c8-d7**
12. 0-0 **♗d7-c6**
13. ♖a1-b1 **♕d8-d7**
14. ♗b2-a1



with an unclear game.

Advance Variation

1. ♘g1-f3 **d7-d5**
2. c2-c4



2. ... **d5-d4**

This ambitious move was played as far back as 1854 (!!) by Jaenisch, which was a good 35 years before Réti was a twinkle in his father's eye. Definitely an example of *nihil sub sole novum*.

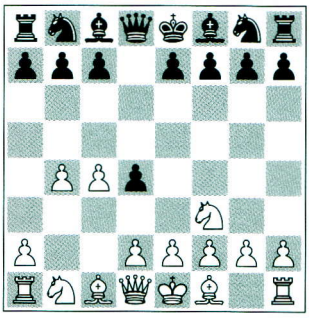
Black gains space in the centre but at the same time he makes it easier for White's light-squared bishop to dominate the a8-h1 diagonal. In addition Black's centre becomes more rigid and it could become the target of counterplay by White.

Are there enough benefits to justify these negative consequences?

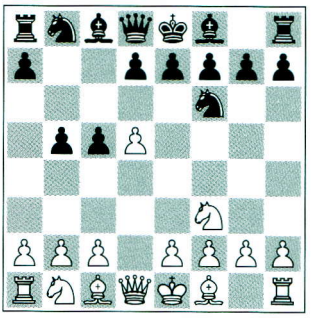
Judging by the line's excellent performance, the answer would appear to be yes.
Here we will examine two lines that have been seen in tournament play: 3.b4 and 3.e3.

A) 3. b2-b4

White hopes to obtain some sort of advantage by grabbing space on the queenside.



In comparison to the line 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c5 3.d5 b5



(a **Pseudo-Benko** – see the 2nd volume of our series), White is a tempo up as Black has not yet played ...♘f6.
However, in the abovementioned line 4.♗g5! gives White a nice advantage, so it is unlikely that the extra tempo is going to change things radically.

3. ... g7-g6

Another move is 3...f6 so as to assist an e7-e5 advance: 4.e3 e5 5.c5!?, with complex play. Otherwise there is 3...♗g4!?, which discourages White from establishing a kingside fianchetto, as in its sister variation: after 4.♕b3, which prevents the creation of doubled f-pawns, the position is still unexplored.

4. g2-g3 ♗f8-g7
5. ♗f1-g2 e7-e5
6. d2-d3 ♘g8-e7
7. 0-0 0-0

and both sides have something.

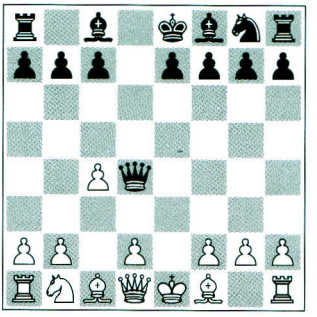
B) 3. e2-e3

Attacking the head of the pawn chain is strategically logical. However, the problem is that White is left with a weak backward d3 pawn.

3. ... ♘b8-c6!

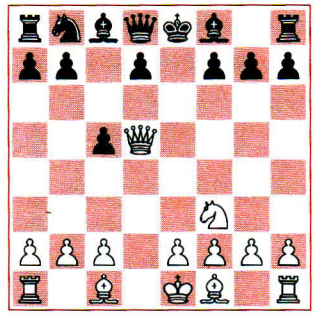
as we pointed out under line A, after 3...c5, the advantage that the extra tempo gives White in respect to the **Benko** (4.b4!?) or the **Benoni** (4.exd4) could very easily become apparent.

4. e3xd4 ♘c6xd4
5. ♘f3xd4 ♕d8xd4



We have a very similar position to this with reversed colours after 1.d4 ♘f6

2.♘f3 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3! exd5 5.♘xd5 ♘xd5 6.♕xd5,



which is considered to be slightly in White's favour. There the knight has already developed to f3, whereas in the Réti the black knight is still on g8. However, we cannot presume that this is a disadvantage: from g8 the knight can still go to f5 (via e7 or h6) where it will control the weak d4-square.

6. ♘b1-c3 e7-e5

6...c6 is an interesting move which exerts control over the important d5 and b5-squares: 7.d3 ♘h6!? 8.♗e3 ♕d8 9.♗xh6 gxh6, and as is so often the case in many **Advance French** lines, Black's dark-square control makes up for the doubled h-pawns.

7. d2-d3 ♘g8-e7

8. ♗f1-e2

8.♗e3 does not resolve the problem of the weakness on d4: 8...♕d8 9.♗e2 ♘f5 and Black does not have any worries.

8. ... ♘e7-f5

9. 0-0

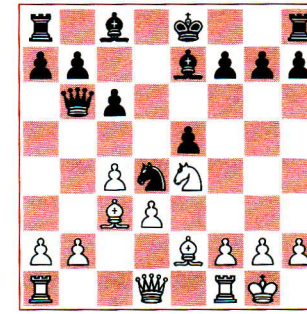
Recently some players have tried to stir things up with 9.g4 ♘h4 10.♖g1, after which the c1 bishop can develop with tempo, but weakening the kingside in this fashion is of doubtful merit.

9. ... c7-c6

10. ♘c3-e4 ♗f8-e7

11. ♗c1-d2 ♕d4-b6

12. ♗d2-c3 ♘f5-d4

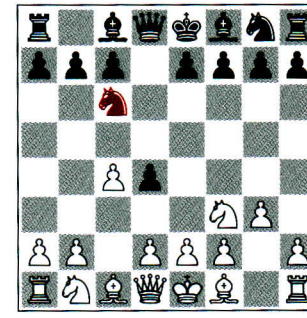


and Black should be pleased with his game.

C) 3. g2-g3

This is the most popular move with top players.

3. ... ♘b8-c6!



As we have already mentioned, the advance 3...c5 may be playable in these lines, but at the same time it involves a high level of risk as White can play a **Benoni** or **Benko** with an extra tempo.

It is also worth thinking about 3...g6 4.♗g2 (4.b4 transposes to D1 below)

4...♗g7 5.0-0 e5 6.d3 ♘c6 7.♘a3 ♘ge7 8.♘c2 a5, with equal opportunities for both sides.

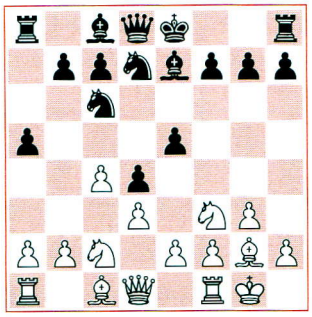
4. ♗f1-g2 e7-e5

5. d2-d3 ♘g8-f6

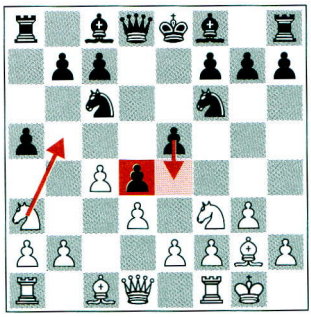
After 5...♘ge7, 6.b4! looks good for White.

6. 0-0 a7-a5

The alternative 6...♗e7 does not impress: 7.b4! ♗xb4 8.♘xe5 and White is better. In contrast, the move 6...♘d7 has scored really well for Black: 7.♘a3 ♗e7 8.♘c2 a5.



7. ♘b1-a3



Undermining the centre with 7.e3 gains nothing for White as there is 7...dxe3! 8.♗xe3 ♗e7 9.♘c3 0-0.

7. ... ♗f8-c5

8. ♘a3-b5!?

White struggles to execute the b2-b4 push after 8.♘c2 0-0 9.b3 ♖e8 10.a3 ♕d6 11.♖b1 ♗f5 12.♕d2 e4, and Black will arrive first.

8. ... 0-0

9. ♗c1-g5

With the idea of 10.♗xf6 ♕xf6 and then 11.♘xc7.

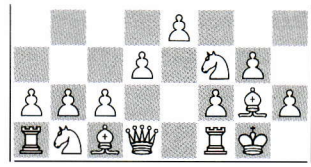
9. ... ♗c5-e7

and neither side has an advantage.

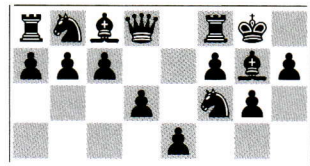
King's Indian Attack

We have seen previously in this volume (and also in the first book of our series on 1.e4) how often White can transpose to the **King's Indian Attack**. It is appropriate to collect these ideas in one section and to expand on those points that merit deeper discussion.

The **King's Indian Attack** is the set-up characterized by the moves **1.♘f3**, **2.g3**, **3.♗g2**, **4.0-0**, **5.d3** and **6.e4** (which are usually played regardless of Black's choice of reply).



It is so named as Black typically plays the corresponding moves in the King's Indian:



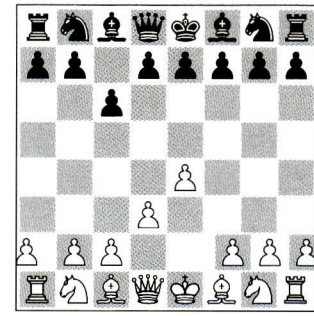
The extra move provides White with greater attacking possibilities.

King's Indian Attack after 1.e4

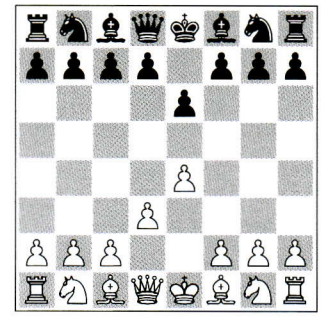
Given that one of the characterizing moves of the King's Indian Attack is the advance e2-e4, it comes as no surprise that it is possible to establish the KIA after opening the game with 1.e4.

However, consistent with the fact that against the King's Indian White's best plan is to advance his pawn to e4, experience has demonstrated that the King's Indian Attack is at its most effective only when Black has played ...e7-e6 (as then ...e6-e5 will require the use of another tempo), or otherwise after ...c7-c6 (as also here the 'necessary' ...c6-c5 will cost a tempo).

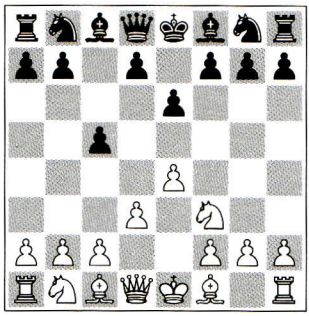
It is therefore no coincidence that in the first volume of this series we see the **King's Indian Attack** as a possible option for fighting against the **Caro-Kann** (1.e4 c6 2.d3)



and the **French** (1.e4 e6 2.d3)



and the **Sicilian with 2...e6** (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d3 – see diagram next page).



Against the French and the Sicilian the two variations often coincide, and the following is a typical line that you see with both defences:

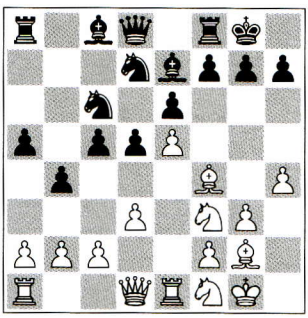
1.	**e2-e4**	**c7-c5**

(or 1...e6 2.d3 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.♘gf3)

2.	**♘g1-f3**	**e7-e6**
3.	**d2-d3**	**d7-d5**
4.	**♘b1-d2**	**♘b8-c6**
5.	**g2-g3**	**♘g8-f6**
6.	**♗f1-g2**	**♗f8-e7**
7.	**0-0**	**0-0**

As Black's castled king supplies White with a clear target, it could be a good idea to postpone this move and instead play the immediate 7...b5!?.

8.	**♖f1-e1**	**b7-b5**
9.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-d7**
10.	**♘d2-f1**	**a7-a5**
11.	**h2-h4**	**b5-b4**
12.	**♗c1-f4**	



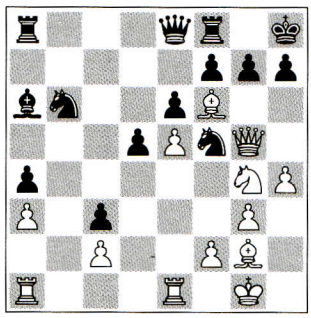
Reinforcing his control of e5. White is ready to play ♘h2-g4 and ♘g5 / ♕h5, amassing his pieces on the kingside and seriously jeopardizing the black monarch's safety.

Theory tells us that we are in positions that are dynamically balanced, but in practice it is no easy task for Black to defend himself. The following line is not forcing, but it is indicative of the potential of White's attack.

12.	**...**	**a5-a4**
13.	**a2-a3**	**♗c8-a6**
14.	**♘f1-h2**	**c5-c4?**

Too ambitious: following 14...bxa3! 15.bxa3 ♖b8, Black has sufficient counterplay to draw White's attention away from his attack on the kingside

15.	**d3-d4**	**c4-c3**
16.	**b2xc3**	**b4xc3**
17.	**♘f3-g5**	**♘d7-b6**
18.	**♕d1-h5**	**♗e7xg5**
19.	**♗f4xg5**	**♕d8-e8**
20.	**♗g5-f6!**	**♘c6xd4**
21.	**♘h2-g4**	**♘d4-f5**
22.	**♕h5-g5**	**♔g8-h8**



23.	**♗f6xg7+!**	**♘f5xg7**
24.	**♘g4-f6**	**♕e8-d8**
25.	**♕g5-h6**	

forcing mate.

King's Indian Attack after 1.♘g1-f3

More frequently White will seek to enter the King's Indian Attack with

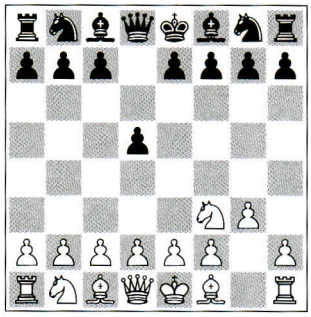
1. ♘g1-f3

and in so doing prevent 1...e5, which as we have seen is a move that robs the KIA of much of its effectiveness.

1. ... d7-d5

For 1...♘f6 2.g3 go to page 19 (in the section on 1.♘f3 ♘f6).

2. g2-g3



We noted on page 26 (in the section on 1.♘f3 d5 2.g3) that both 2...♘c6!? and 2...g6 are good attempts to render the King's Indian Attack innocuous. Indeed, if White continues with ♗g2 or 0-0, Black can advance ...e7-e5 and White is playing a **reverse Pirc**, which presents no particular problems for Black.

However, Black will often play more solidly and opt for ...c6, and then develop his bishop to f5 or g4. See page 30 (Variation D71-D72 in the section on 1.♘f3 d5 2.g3)

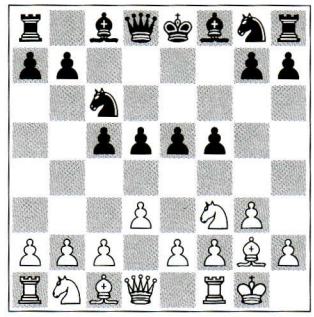
As a final option, Black can continue by applying the ideas normally employed by White against the King's Indian, but here with a tempo less:

2. ... c7-c5
3. ♗f1-g2 ♘b8-c6
4. 0-0 e7-e5

As we all know, the King's Indian is a defence where Black plays on the razor's edge and thus every tempo can be crucial. Therefore, when playing against the KIA, Black must always keep this fact foremost in his mind and avoid a hasty occupation of the centre. For example, after

5. d2-d3

the pawn advance **5...f5**, which would create a reverse **Four Pawns Attack**, looks decidedly reckless:



After 6.c4 d4 7.e3, White will open the position to his advantage. In equal measure, 5...f6, with the idea of playing a Sämisch with reverse colours, appears to be excessively risky. All this would suggest that it may be more appropriate to play a quieter move such as

5. ... ♗f8-e7

(or first 5...♘f6), with the idea after

6. ♘b1-d2 ♘g8-f6
7. e2-e4 d5-d4!?

of playing the solid Petrosian Variation (see Volume 3) with reversed colours, and White will find it a challenge to realize the advantage of the first move.

Réti,Richard
Capablanca,Jose Raul
New York 1924 (5)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.b4 ♗g7 4.♗b2 0-0 5.g3 b6 6.♗g2 ♗b7 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 ♘bd7 9.♘bd2 e5 10.♕c2 ♖e8 11.♖fd1 a5 12.a3 h6 13.♘f1 c5 14.b5 ♘f8 15.e3 ♕c7 16.d4 ♗e4 17.♕c3 exd4 18.exd4 ♘6d7 19.♕d2 cxd4 20.♗xd4 ♕xc4 21.♗xg7 ♔xg7 22.♕b2+ ♔g8 23.♖xd6 ♕c5 24.♖ad1 ♖a7 25.♘e3 ♕h5 26.♘d4 ♗xg2 27.♔xg2 ♕e5 28.♘c4 ♕c5 29.♘c6 ♖c7 30.♘e3 ♘e5 31.♖1d5 1-0

Réti,Richard
Janowsky,Dawid
New York 1924 (22)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘a3 ♘f6 4.♘xc4 e6 5.g3 ♘bd7 6.♗g2 ♘b6 7.0-0 ♘xc4 8.♕a4+ c6 9.♕xc4 ♗e7 10.b3 0-0 11.♗b2 ♘d5 12.d4 f5 13.♘e5 ♗f6 14.e4 ♗xe5 15.dxe5 fxe4 16.♗xe4 ♗d7 17.♕d3 h6 18.♗a3 ♖e8 19.♗h7+ ♔h8 20.♗g6 b6 21.f4 ♕c8 22.♗xe8 ♕xe8 23.♖f2 g6 24.h4 c5 25.h5 ♔g7 26.♕xg6+ ♕xg6 27.hxg6 ♔xg6 28.♖e1 h5 29.f5+ exf5 30.e6 ♗c6 31.e7 ♘c7 32.♖d2 ♔f7 33.♖d8 ♘e8 34.♗c1 a5 35.♖xa8 ♗xa8 36.♗g5 ♗d5 37.♔f2 ♘g7 38.♗f4 ♘e6 39.e8♕+ ♔xe8 40.♖e5 ♗xb3 41.axb3 ♔d7 42.♖d5+ ♔e7 43.♗e3 1-0

Torre Repetto,Carlos
Lasker,Edward
Chicago 1926 (13)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘a3 e5 4.♘xe5 ♗xa3 5.♕a4+ b5 6.♕xa3 ♗b7 7.b3 ♕d6 8.♗b2 f6 9.♕xd6 cxd6 10.♘f3 cxb3 11.♘d4 a6 12.axb3 ♔d7 13.♘f5 g6 14.♘e3 ♔e6 15.♖c1 ♘c6 16.g3 ♘ge7 17.♗h3+ ♔f7 18.0-0 h5 19.♖c2 ♖hd8 20.♖fc1 d5 21.♖c5 d4 22.♘g2 ♗c8 23.♗xc8 ♖axc8 24.♘f4 ♘a5 25.♖c7 ♘xb3 26.♗a3 ♘xc1 27.♖xe7+ ♔g8 28.♘xg6 ♖e8 29.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 30.♗xc1 d3 31.e3 b4 32.♘f4 ♖d8 33.♗b2 a5 34.♗xf6 ♖d7 35.e4 a4 36.♘d5 ♖b7 37.f3 a3 38.♘xb4 ♖xb4 39.♔f2 ♔f7 40.♗h8 ♖b8 41.♗d4 a2 42.♔e3 ♔g6 43.h4 ♖b1 44.♔xd3 ♖g1 45.♔e3 ♖xg3 46.♔f4 ♖h3 47.♔e5 ♖xf3 48.♔e6 ♖d3 0-1

Réti,Richard
Bogoljubow,Efim
Moscow 1925 (8)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.b3 ♗g4 4.♗b2 e6 5.e3 ♘f6 6.♗e2 ♗e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.h3 ♗h5 9.d3 c5 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘c3 ♘c6 12.♖c1 ♖c8 13.♕d2 ♘xc3 14.♗xc3 ♕b6 15.♕b2 f6 16.♖fd1 ♖fd8 17.♘e1 ♗xe2 18.♕xe2 ♕a6 19.♖c2 ♖d6 20.♕g4 ♖cd8 21.h4 b6 22.h5 ♕b7 23.♖dc1 ♕d7 24.f4 e5 25.f5 ♗f8 26.♖f2 ♕f7 27.♖f3 a5 28.♖g3 ♖a8 29.♕f3 a4 30.b4 e4 31.dxe4 ♖ad8 32.bxc5 bxc5 33.h6 ♔h8 34.hxg7+ ♗xg7 35.♕e2 ♘b4 36.♗xb4 cxb4 37.♘f3 b3 38.♘d4 bxa2 39.♖a1 ♗h6 40.♘e6 ♖xe6 41.fxe6 ♕xe6 42.♖xa2 ♕xe4 43.♕f3 ♗xe3+ 44.♕xe3 1-0

Giorgadze,Tamaz
Petrosian,Tigran
Moscow tt 1979

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c6 3.♘f3 d5 4.e3 g6 5.b3 ♗g7 6.♗b2 0-0 7.♗e2 ♗g4

8.d4 e6 9.0-0 ♘bd7 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♖e8 12.♕c2 ♖c8 13.♖ad1 b5 14.e4 bxc4 15.bxc4 dxe4 16.♘xe4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♕c7 18.♖fe1 ♖cd8 19.c5 ♘f6 20.♗f3 ♘d5 21.♗c1 ♖d7 22.♗g5 ♖b8 23.♗h4 ♖b4 24.♗g3 ♕d8 25.♗e5 ♗xe5 26.dxe5 ♕a5 27.♖e4 ♖xe4 28.♗xe4 ♘b4 29.♕b1 ♖xd1+ 30.♕xd1 ♘d5 31.♗xd5 exd5 32.♕c1 ♕xa2 33.g4 d4 34.♔f1 ♕d5 35.♕g5 a5 36.♕e7 ♔g7 37.♕f6+ ♔f8 38.e6 ♕xe6 39.♕d8+ ♔g7 40.♕xd4+ ♕f6 41.♕e4 h6 42.♔g2 ♕e6 43.♕d4+ ♔h7 44.h4 h5 45.gxh5 gxh5 46.f3 ♕g6+ 47.♔h3 ♕f5+ 48.♔g3 ♔g6 49.♔g2 a4 50.♕xa4 ♕xc5 51.♕a1 ♔f5 52.♕h8 ♔e6 53.♕e8+ ♔f6 54.♕h8+ ♔e7 55.♔g3 ♕d6+ 56.♔f2 ♕h2+ 57.♔e3 ♕xh4 58.♕e5+ ♔d7 59.♕f5+ ♔d6 60.♔d3 f6 61.♕a5 ♔d7 62.♕a7+ ♔e6 63.♕a8 ♔f5 64.♕xc6 ♕e1 65.♕c5+ ♕e5 66.♕c4 ♔g5 67.♕c1+ ♔h4 68.f4 ♕d5+ 69.♔e3 f5 70.♕e1+ ♔h3 71.♕c3 ♔g4 72.♔f2 ♕a2+ 73.♔g1 ♕e2 74.♕g7+ ♔f3 75.♕g5 ♕e3+ 76.♔h1 ♕c1+ 0-1

Tomashevsky,Evgeny
Kramnik,Vladimir
Moscow ch-RUS 2005 (5)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♗b2 ♗d6 7.♕c2 0-0 8.h3 b6 9.g4 ♗b7 10.g5 ♘e8 11.h4 f5 12.♘d4 ♕e7 13.♗g2 ♖c8 14.f4 ♗c5 15.♘ce2 ♘d6 16.♘f3 dxc4 17.h5 ♗b4 18.h6 g6 19.0-0 cxb3 20.axb3 a5 21.♖ad1 c5 22.♗a1 ♔f7 23.d3 ♔e8 24.♘c3 b5 25.♘a2 ♗a3 26.♕d2 b4 27.♘c1 ♔f7 28.♘e2 ♔g8 29.♘e1 ♗d5 30.♘c2 ♗xg2 31.♔xg2 e5 32.♘xa3 bxa3 33.♕c3 ♘f7 34.♘g3 ♘b6 35.e4 fxe4 36.dxe4 c4 37.fxe5 cxb3 38.♕xb3 ♘c4 39.e6 ♕xe6 40.♖f6 ♕e7 41.♖df1 ♕b4 0-1

Pantsulaia,Levan
Bareev,Evgeny
Beer-Sheva Wch-tt 2005 (3)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.g3 dxc4 4.♗g2 e6 5.0-0 b5 6.d3 cxd3 7.♘e5 ♗b7 8.a4 b4 9.a5 ♘e7 10.♘xd3 ♘a6 11.♕a4 ♘d5 12.♖d1 ♕c8 13.e4 ♘f6 14.♗d2 ♗e7 15.♗xb4 ♘xb4 16.♘xb4 0-0 17.♖c1 ♖b8 18.♘xc6 ♗xc6 19.♖xc6 ♕d7 20.e5 ♖b4 21.♕c2 ♘d5 22.♘d2 ♖xb2 23.♕xb2 ♕xc6 24.♖c1 ♕d7 25.♕d4 ♖d8 26.♗xd5 ♕xd5 27.♕xd5 ♖xd5 28.♖c8+ ♗f8 29.♘c4 ♖c5 30.♖xc5 ♗xc5 31.♔f1 ♔f8 32.♔e2 ♔e7 33.f4 ♔d7 34.h3 ♔c6 35.♔d3 ♔d5 36.g4 g6 37.♘d2 g5 38.fxg5 ♔xe5 39.♘e4 ♗b4 40.♘f6 ♗xa5 41.♘xh7 ♗d8 42.h4 ♔f4 43.g6 fxg6 44.♘f8 ♔xg4 45.♘xg6 ♗xh4 46.♔e4 ♔g5 47.♘e5 ♗g3 48.♘c6 a6 49.♘d8 ♔f6 50.♘b7 ♗f2 51.♘a5 ♗e1 52.♘c4 a5 53.♘b6 ♔e7 54.♔e5 ♗c3+ 55.♔e4 ♔d6 56.♘c4+ ♔c6 57.♔d3 ♗b4 58.♔d4 a4 59.♔e5 ♔c5 60.♘e3 a3 61.♔xe6 a2 0-1

Réti,Richard
Berger,Victor
London 1927 (6)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c6 3.g3 d5 4.b3 g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.♗b2 0-0 7.0-0 ♗g4 8.h3 ♗f5 9.♕c1 ♗xb1 10.♖xb1 a5 11.d3 ♘a6 12.♖e1 ♘c7 13.e4 ♘e6 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.♕e3 ♖e8 16.♘d4

♘c7 17.f4 e6 18.♘f3 ♘a6 19.♖e2 ♖c8 20.♘e5 ♖a8 21.g4 ♘c7 22.♕f2 ♖a6 23.♖be1 h5 24.♗f3 hxg4 25.hxg4 ♘d7 26.♘xd7 ♕xd7 27.♗xg7 ♔xg7 28.♕d4+ f6 29.exd5 ♘xd5 30.♗xd5 ♖d6 31.g5 exd5 32.♖xe8 1-0

Capablanca,Jose Raul
Lilienthal,Andor
Moscow 1936 (8)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.b3 ♗f5 4.♗b2 e6 5.g3 ♘f6 6.♗g2 ♘bd7 7.0-0 h6 8.d3 ♗e7 9.♘bd2 0-0 10.♖c1 a5 11.a3 ♖e8 12.♖c2 ♗h7 13.♕a1 ♗f8 14.♖e1 ♕b6 15.♗h3 ♗c5 16.♖f1 ♗f8 17.♖cc1 ♖ad8 18.♖fe1 ♗c5 19.♖f1 ♗f8 20.♗g2 ♗d6 21.♘e5 ♗xe5 22.♗xe5 ♘xe5 23.♕xe5 ♘d7 24.♕b2 ♘f6 25.b4 axb4 26.♕xb4 ♕xb4 27.axb4 ♖a8 28.♖a1 ♘d7 29.♘b3 ♔f8 30.♖a5 dxc4 31.dxc4 ♘b6 32.♖xa8 ♖xa8 33.♘a5 ♖a7 34.♖d1 ♔e8 35.♘xb7 ♖xb7 36.♗xc6+ ♖d7 37.c5 ♔e7 38.♗xd7 ♘xd7 39.c6 ♘b6 40.c7 ♗f5 41.♖d8 e5 42.♖b8 ♘c8 43.b5 ♔d6 44.b6 ♘e7 45.♖f8 ♗c8 46.♖xf7 ♘d5 47.♖xg7 ♘xb6 48.♖h7 ♘d5 49.♖xh6+ ♔xc7 50.e4 ♘e7 51.f3 ♔d7 52.h4 ♔e8 53.♖f6 ♘g8 54.♖c6 1-0

Jobava,Baadur
Wang Hao
Taiyuan tt 2006 (7)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c6 3.g3 d5 4.♗g2 ♗g4 5.♘e5 ♗f5 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♘c3 ♘bd7 8.♕a4 e6 9.g4 ♗g6 10.h4 a6 11.♘xd7 ♕xd7 12.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 13.h5 ♗e4 14.f3 ♗c2 15.g5 ♘e8 16.d3 d4 17.♔d2 dxc3+ 18.♔xc2 cxb2 19.♗xb2 ♖c8+ 20.♔d1 h6 21.g6 f6 22.f4 ♗e7 23.e4 ♘c7 24.a4 a5 25.♔d2 ♗b4+ 26.♔e3 ♘a6 27.♖hc1 ♘c5 28.♖c4 ♘b3 29.♖d1 b6 30.♗f1 ♖xc4 31.dxc4+ ♔e7 32.c5 ♗xc5+ 33.♔f3 ♗d6 34.♗c4 ♘c5 35.e5 fxe5 36.♖xd6 ♔xd6 37.♗xe5+ ♔e7 38.♗xg7 ♖d8 39.♗xh6 ♖d4 40.♗g5+ ♔f8 41.h6 ♖xc4 42.♗f6 ♘d7 43.h7 ♘xf6 44.h8♕+ ♘g8 45.♕h7 ♖c3+ 46.♔e2 1-0

Thiede,Lars
Lutz,Christopher
Germany cup 2005 (1)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.g3 c6 3.♗g2 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g4 5.♘e5 ♗e6 6.♕c2 ♘bd7 7.d4 g6 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♕b3 ♕b6 10.♕xb6 ♘xb6 11.♘c3 ♖c8 12.h3 ♗g7 13.♘d3 ♗d7 14.♘c5 ♗c6 15.e3 ♘fd7 16.♘xd7 ♔xd7 17.0-0 e6 18.♖d1 ♘c4 19.b3 ♘d6 20.♗f1 ♗f8 21.♗a3 ♘e4 22.♗xf8 ♘xc3 23.♖dc1 ♖hxf8 24.♖xc3 ♔d6 25.♖ac1 ♗d7 26.h4 ♖xc3 27.♖xc3 a5 28.♗d3 h6 29.♔f1 g5 30.hxg5 hxg5 31.♔g2 ♖h8 32.♖c1 f6 33.♖c5 b6 34.♖c1 ♗c6 35.♖h1 ♖xh1 36.♔xh1 g4 37.♔g2 b5 38.f3 gxf3+ 39.♔xf3 b4 40.♔g4 ♗e8 41.♔h4 a4 42.g4 a3 43.g5 fxg5+ 44.♔xg5 e5 45.♗e2 ♗a4 46.♗d1 ♗b5 47.♗c2 ♗e2 48.♔f5 e4 49.♔f6 ♗f3 50.♔f5 ♗h5 51.♔f6 ♗e2 52.♔f5 ♗f3 ½-½

Dizdarevic,Emir
Aronian,Levon
Calvia ol 2004 (4)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 ♗f5 4.c4 c6 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.♕b3 ♕b6 7.♕xb6 axb6 8.♘c3 ♘c6 9.d3 e5 10.0-0 h6

11.♘b5 ♔d7 12.d4 e4 13.♘e5+ ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♘g4 15.h3 ♘xe5 16.♖d1 ♗e6 17.♗xe4 ♔c6 18.♘d4+ ♔d7 19.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 20.♗xf3 ♗c5 21.♗d2 f6 22.♗c3 ♔c7 23.♔g2 ♖hd8 24.♖ac1 ♔b8 25.a3 ♔a7 26.e3 ♖ac8 27.♖d2 ♖d7 28.♖cd1 ♖cd8 29.h4 ♗e7 30.h5 ♗c5 31.♗d4 ♖c7 32.♗c3 ♖cd7 33.♗d4 ♖c7 34.♗c3 ♖cd7 ½-½

Kozul,Zdenko
Bareev,Evgeny
Sarajevo 1998 (1)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.b3 d5 4.♗b2 ♗e7 5.e3 0-0 6.♕c2 c5 7.a3 ♘c6 8.♗d3 d4 9.exd4 ♘xd4 10.♗xd4 cxd4 11.0-0 b6 12.♗e2 ♗b7 13.d3 ♖c8 14.♘bd2 ♘d5 15.♘e1 b5 16.♗f3 ♕d7 17.b4 e5 18.♕b3 bxc4 19.♘xc4 f6 20.b5 ♔h8 21.a4 ♖c5 22.♘a5 ♗a8 23.g3 a6 24.♘c6 ♗xc6 25.bxc6 ♕xc6 26.♘c2 ♕d6 27.♖fe1 ♖b8 28.♕a2 ♘c3 29.♕f7 ♖f8 30.♕b3 ♖b8 31.♕f7 ♖f8 32.♕b3 f5 33.♗g2 ♖b8 34.♕a3 e4 35.dxe4 d3 36.e5 ♕c7 37.♘b4 d2 38.♘xa6 ♖xe5 39.♖f1 ♗xa3 40.♘xc7 ♗b2 0-1

Ivanchuk,Vasily
Asrian,Karen
Warsaw Ech 2005 (1)

1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 a5 7.♗b2 a4 8.♘a3 c6 9.d3 ♘bd7 10.♕c2 ♗b4 11.♖fc1 h6 12.♕d1 ♖e8 13.♘c2 ♗f8 14.b4 e5 15.a3 b5 16.c5 ♕c7 17.♘d2 g6 18.e4 d4 19.♕e2 ♗g7 20.♖f1 ♘f8 21.♖ae1 h5 22.f4 exf4 23.♗xd4 ♘e6 24.♗xf6 ♗xf6 25.e5 ♗g5 26.d4 fxg3 27.hxg3 ♗xd2 28.♕xd2 ♘g7 29.d5 cxd5 30.♗xd5 ♗e6 31.♗xa8 ♖xa8 32.♕d6 ♕c8 33.♘d4 ♗c4 34.e6 fxe6 35.♘c6 ♕e8 36.♖f6 ♔h7 37.♘e5 ♖d8 38.♕c7 ♖c8 39.♕f7 ♕xf7 40.♖xf7 ♔h6 41.♖f6 ♘f5 42.♖xg6+ ♔h7 43.♖d1 ♗d5 44.♖g5 ♔h6 45.♖xf5 1-0

Kasparov,Garry
Karpov,Anatoly
Sevilla Wch-match 1987 (24)

1.c4 e6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.b3 ♗e7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 b6 7.♗b2 ♗b7 8.e3 ♘bd7 9.♘c3 ♘e4 10.♘e2 a5 11.d3 ♗f6 12.♕c2 ♗xb2 13.♕xb2 ♘d6 14.cxd5 ♗xd5 15.d4 c5 16.♖fd1 ♖c8 17.♘f4 ♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♕e7 19.♖ac1 ♖fd8 20.dxc5 ♘xc5 21.b4 axb4 22.♕xb4 ♕a7 23.a3 ♘f5 24.♖b1 ♖xd1+ 25.♖xd1 ♕c7 26.♘d3 h6 27.♖c1 ♘e7 28.♕b5 ♘f5 29.a4 ♘d6 30.♕b1 ♕a7 31.♘e5 ♘xa4 32.♖xc8+ ♘xc8 33.♕d1 ♘e7 34.♕d8+ ♔h7 35.♘xf7 ♘g6 36.♕e8 ♕e7 37.♕xa4 ♕xf7 38.♗e4 ♔g8 39.♕b5 ♘f8 40.♕xb6 ♕f6 41.♕b5 ♕e7 42.♔g2 g6 43.♕a5 ♕g7 44.♕c5 ♕f7 45.h4 h5 46.♕c6 ♕e7 47.♗d3 ♕f7 48.♕d6 ♔g7 49.e4 ♔g8 50.♗c4 ♔g7 51.♕e5+ ♔g8 52.♕d6 ♔g7 53.♗b5 ♔g8 54.♗c6 ♕a7 55.♕b4 ♕c7 56.♕b7 ♕d8 57.e5 ♕a5 58.♗e8 ♕c5 59.♕f7+ ♔h8 60.♗a4 ♕d5+ 61.♔h2 ♕c5 62.♗b3 ♕c8 63.♗d1 ♕c5 64.♔g2 1-0

Botvinnik,Mikhail
Flohr,Salomon
Moscow ch-URS 1944 (7)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.e3 ♘c6 4.exd4 ♘xd4 5.♘xd4 ♕xd4 6.♘c3 c6 7.d3 e5 8.♗e3 ♕d8 9.♗e2 ♘f6 10.0-0

♗e7 11.♔h1 0-0 12.f4 exf4 13.♖xf4 ♗e6 14.d4 ♕d7 15.♗d3 ♗g4 16.♕d2 ♗h5 17.♗f5 ♕c7 18.♖af1 ♗g6 19.♖h4 ♖fe8 20.♗f4 ♕d8 21.♗xg6 fxg6 22.♖h3 ♕d7 23.a3 ♖ad8 24.♖d3 ♕e6 25.d5 cxd5 26.cxd5 ♕a6 27.♖d1 ♗d6 28.h3 h6 29.♗xd6 ♕xd6 30.♖e3 ♖xe3 31.♕xe3 a6 32.♕d3 ♘h5 33.♖e1 ♘g3+ 34.♔g1 ♖f8 35.♕e3 ♔h7 36.♘e4 ♘xe4 37.♕xe4 ♖f5 38.♖d1 ♖f6 39.♕b4 ♕xb4 40.axb4 ♖d6 41.♔f2 ♔g8 42.♔e3 ♔f7 43.♖f1+ ♖f6 44.♖xf6+ gxf6 45.g4 ♔e7 46.h4 ♔d6 47.♔e4 b6 48.h5 gxh5 49.gxh5 a5 50.♔f5 axb4 51.♔xf6 ♔xd5 52.♔g6 ♔e6 53.♔xh6 ♔f6 54.b3 ♔f7 55.♔g5 ♔g7 56.♔f5 ♔h6 57.♔e5 ♔xh5 58.♔d5 ♔g5 59.♔c6 ♔f5 60.♔xb6 ♔e6 61.♔c5 ♔d7 62.♔xb4 ♔c6 63.♔a5 ♔b7 64.♔b5 ♔a7 65.♔c6 ♔a6 66.b4 ♔a7 67.b5 ♔b8 68.♔b6 1-0

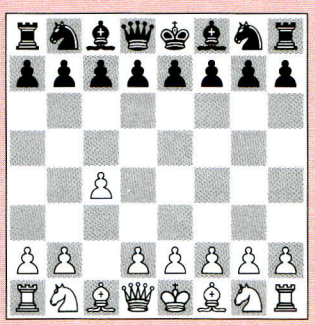
Rausis,Igors
Vallejo Pons,Francisco
Port Barcares tt 2005 (9)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.e3 ♘c6 4.exd4 ♘xd4 5.♘xd4 ♕xd4 6.♘c3 c6 7.d3 ♘h6 8.♗e2 ♘f5 9.g4 ♘h4 10.♖g1 ♕d6 11.f4 e5 12.f5 h5 13.h3 ♕d4 14.♖g3 hxg4 15.hxg4 g6 16.fxg6 ♘xg6 17.♗e3 ♕d8 18.♔d2 ♗e6 19.♕a4 ♘f4 20.♖e1 ♗e7 21.♗xf4 exf4 22.♖g2 ♕d4 23.♔c2 0-0-0 24.♖f1 ♖h3 25.♖gf2 ♖xd3 26.♗xd3 ♕xd3+ 27.♔c1 ♗c5 28.♕c2 ♗xc4 29.♖xf4 ♕e3+ 0-1

Takacs,Sandor (Alexander)
Rubinstein,Akiba
Meran 1924 (5)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.e3 ♘c6 4.b4 dxe3 5.fxe3 ♘xb4 6.d4 e5 7.a3 e4 8.♘fd2 ♘d3+ 9.♗xd3 exd3 10.0-0 ♘f6 11.♕b3 ♗e7 12.♕xd3 0-0 13.♘c3 ♗g4 14.♘f3 c5 15.♗b2 cxd4 16.exd4 ♖c8 17.♘d1 ♗h5 18.♘e3 ♗g6 19.♕b3 ♖e8 20.♘e5 ♕c7 21.c5 ♖cd8 22.♖ac1 ♗f8 23.a4 ♗e4 24.♖f4 ♗d5 25.♘xd5 ♖xd5 26.♖cf1 ♖ed8 27.♖xf6 gxf6 28.♖xf6 ♖xe5 29.dxe5 ♕xc5+ 30.♔h1 ♕d5 31.♕g3+ ♗g7 32.♖f1 ♕c4 33.♕f3 ♖d3 34.♕f5 ♖d2 35.♗c1 ♖e2 36.♗f4 ♖a2 37.♖d1 ♕c7 38.♕g5 1-0

English Opening 1.c2-c4



So named as it was introduced into tournament play by the English champion Howard Staunton in his 1843 match against Saint-Amant (+2 -2 =4). It was to remain a marginal opening until the end of the 1920's saw the advent of the hypermodern school; Tartakower declared that 1.c2-c4 was probably the best way to start the game as it took control of the strategically vital d5-square.

There is no need to say that the great chess minds of the past sometimes got more than a little carried away in their enthusiasm to stir things up and provoke their complacent colleagues (e.g. Nimzowitsch solemnly announced that after 1. e4 Black has the advantage).

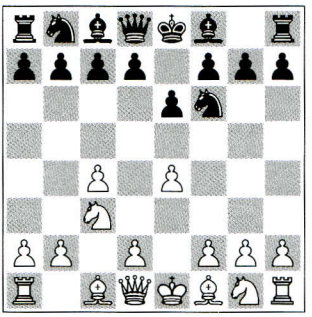
Nevertheless, the debate over what were then minor openings was of the utmost importance for the development of chess theory.

Players of that period continued to prefer the King's Pawn Openings, but with time the English became more and more accepted and now it is the third most popular way to open the game after 1.e4 and 1.d4.

As with 1.♘f3, the **English Opening** is often adopted as a means of transposing; in this case a subsequent d2-d4 leads to a normal **Queen's Pawn Game** with the advantage of sidestepping defences that might be disagreeable for White, such as the **Benoni**, **Benko**, **Grünfeld** or **Nimzo-Indian**.

Let's look in more detail at the chameleon character of this flexible opening:

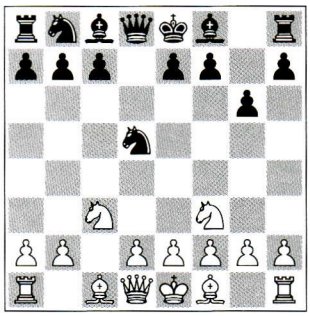
After **1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3**, White is ready to push his pawn to e4. If Black now plays **2...e6** with the intention of entering a **Nimzo-Indian**, White will play 3.e2-e4.



And here it does not make sense for Black to bring the bishop to b4 (the moves 4.e5 and 5.♕g4 would follow, with a clear plus for White). Obviously, Black has the option of 3...c5!, but many a Black player would not relish the prospect of dealing with the complications that arise from 4.e5 ♘g8 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘xe5 8.♘db5.

For the same reason, the Grünfeld is not playable after **2...g6 3.e4**.

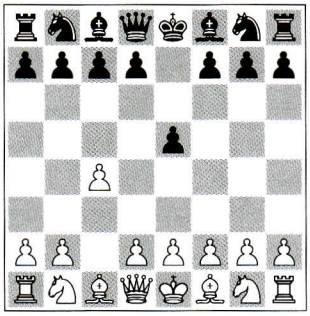
Black can try playing ...d7-d5 one move earlier, but then after **2...d5 3.cxd5 ♘xd5 4.♘f3 g6** (see diagram next page)



he may have to reckon with the various anti-Grünfeld lines (**5.♕a4+**, **5.♕b3**, **5.g3**). By no means do these lines give White an objective advantage, but they are tricky and White will be more familiar with them than his adversary.

So far things are looking rosy, but as always there is a downside: since **1...c5** controls the d4-square, a transposition to the Queen's Pawn Game is only possible if Black allows it. However, this is not going to fuss White, who will generally enjoy the manoeuvring game that arises with the **Symmetrical English**.

The true acid test for the English is **1...e5**.



Black occupies the centre and turns the English into a reverse **Sicilian**.

After 1.e4 c5, White fights for the advantage; here the very least that Black hopes for is equality, notwithstanding the fact that he is a tempo behind.

It is difficult to say if this is objectively realistic: excluding clear cases, equality and advantage are not mathematically quantifiable concepts. The border between equality and a slight advantage is hazy and even grandmasters do not agree in their evaluation. However, there is one thing that most will agree on: 1...e5 creates a game that most 1.c4 players do not particularly like.

This explains why so many players prefer to open with **1.♘f3** with c4 as a follow-up. However, as we have seen in the **Réti**, after **1...d5** the advance **2.c4** allows **2...d4!?**, which can be equally unwelcome to White.

We once again return to a central point that has been reiterated in the previous volumes (as the ancient Romans would say: *repetita iuvant*), namely that the perfect opening does not exist.

Every major opening has its virtues and defects, and personal taste and competitive considerations are often more important than objective value, presuming that indeed this can be measured.

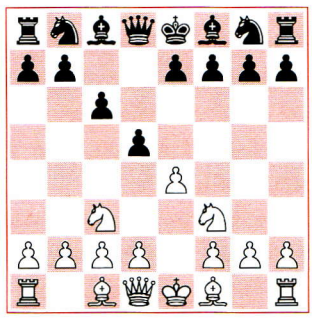
One only needs to look at World Championship matches over the years to see this: openings are determined by the style and repertoire of the opponent and changed accordingly.

Modern matches rarely become a didactic exercise in the use of a particular line. An opening is great as long as it works, and often after the first loss the loser will make a change. To a large extent this is psychologically motivated, and thus it applies as much to the beginner as to the grandmaster; no-one likes playing a line that has just given them a zero.

Naturally, there are exceptions. Some players will religiously defend the mer-

its of their pet line, even in the face of defeat. However, most modern professionals believe that a wide study and use of different openings is an essential weapon in competitive chess.

From his earliest days Fischer used a highly restricted repertoire in which he had complete faith. But without doubt his experience at the 1959 Candidates' Tournament must have left its mark: his noted conviction that White gains an advantage against the **Caro-Kann** with the sequence **1.e4 c6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♘f3**



inspired Petrosian, Smyslov and Keres to repeatedly play the Caro-Kann, with the result that the best he was able to achieve against the three Soviet players was two draws from five games! However, in the 1972 *Match of the Century* in Reykjavik a very different Fischer surprised title holder Boris Spassky with a much more varied repertoire.

He did not respond to **1.d4** with the **King's Indian**, which had always been his weapon of choice, but rather the **Benoni**, **Nimzo-Indian** and **Semi-Tarrasch**. It came as no surprise that the American champ used the **Najdorf** in answer to **1.e4**, but Spassky would hardly have expected the **Paulsen**, a double employment of the **Alekhine**, and the **Pirc**. Result: 2 victories and 2 draws. In addition to **1.e4**, which in his youth he stated to be 'best by test', Fischer played **1.c4** four times, once again achieving the optimum score of 2 victories and 2 draws.

The fact that in this historic match Fischer obtained such good results with openings that are considered to be secondary, is clear evidence of how big a factor psychology is, even for two of the greatest players of all time. It is therefore important that any player who wishes to improve their results and understanding of the game avoid an overly limited repertoire as much as possible.

One does not necessarily need to memorize complicated lines that go deep into the endgame to play good chess: it also makes sense to choose an opening for which a general idea of typical plans is sufficient to start. And when you reach a point where you are not exactly sure what to do, you can improvise; it has been said that at least fifty per cent of theoretical novelties have come about because poor memories created the opportunities for some free thinking!

Enough chat, let's have a look at the specifics of the English.

We have divided this examination of the English into 4 sections:

Black's minor defences

° **1...♘f6**
° **1...c5**
° **1...e5**

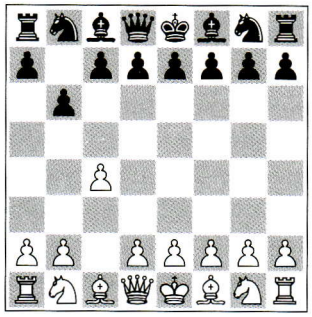
Please remember that 1...e6 and 1...c6, though very important, almost always transpose to lines that were discussed in the section dealing with 1.♘f3 d5 2.c4.

Minor defences to 1.c2-c4

A) 1. ... ♘b8-c6

This often leads to a transposition. After 2.d4 d5, we are in the **Chigorin Defence**. If 2.♘c3 e5, we are in the **English 1...e5**, and after 2.♘f3 e5 3.d4!? e4, we have a more individual line with unclear play.

B) 1. ... b7-b6



If White plays 2.d4 we have transposed to this opening's namesake, the **English Defence**, which was examined in the second volume of our series with the sequence 1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6.

However, many players will want to remain in the spirit of the English Opening and will thus delay or avoid this pawn push and continue with

2. ♘b1-c3 ♗c8-b7
3. e2-e4 e7-e6
4. ♘g1-f3

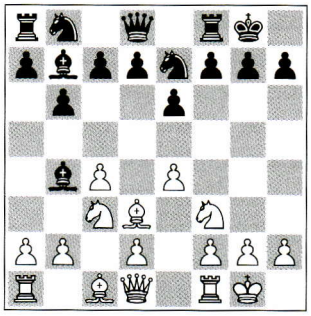
4.d4 transposes to the English Defence.

4. ... ♗f8-b4
5. ♗f1-d3

5.♕b3!? is worth considering.

5. ... ♘g8-e7
6. 0-0 0-0

Black has ...f7-f5 in mind.



This position is strategically rich, with chances for both sides.

C) 1. ... d7-d6

To a certain extent this is a wait-and-see move, which can lead to transpositions to a vast array of defences: **King's Indian**, **Leningrad Dutch**, **the English 1...e5**, **Old Indian**, etc.

Most often White responds with **2.d4** so as to prevent ...e7-e5, going into the 1.d4 d6 line that was discussed in Vol. 2.

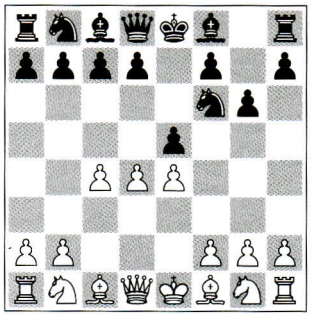
D) 1. ... g7-g6

Here the most common transpositions are to the **King's Indian** and **English 1...e5**. A specific English variation is:

2. e2-e4 e7-e5!?
3. d2-d4

More energetic than 3.♘f3.

3. ... ♘g8-f6!?



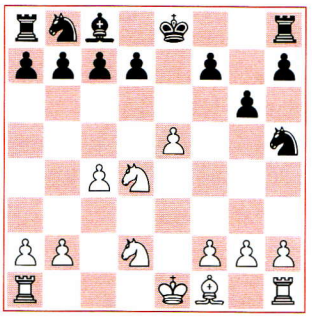
4. ♘g1-f3!

4.dxe5 ♘xe4 5.♕d5 f5 is not so clear.

4. ... e5xd4

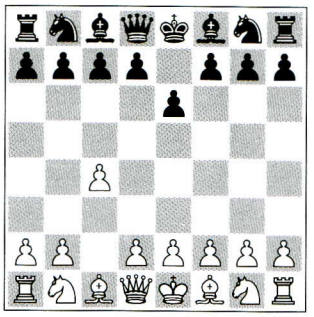
Though 4...♗b4+ is paradoxical (Black has just played 1...g6), it is perhaps feasible; *this is not the case for 4...♘xe4 5.♗d3 ♗b4+ 6.♔f1, which quite simply gives White a tangible advantage.*

5. e4-e5 ♗f8-b4+
6. ♗c1-d2 ♕d8-e7
7. ♗d2xb4 ♕e7xb4+
8. ♕d1-d2 ♕b4xd2+
9. ♘b1xd2 ♘f6-h5
10. ♘f3xd4



The chess engines give White a net advantage here, but given that Black has scored excellently from this position, it would appear that they are overestimating the significance of White's space advantage.

E) 1. ... e7-e6

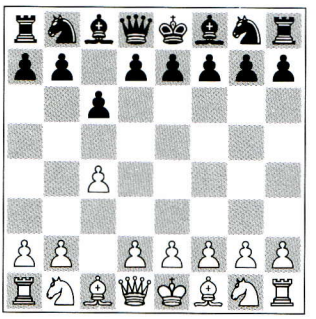


It is evident that the idea is ...d7-d5. This is the most reliable way to proceed if you want to play against a **Queen's Gambit**, while avoiding the complications involved with 1...♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.e4!?.

Now, after 2.♘c3 d5, the 'threat' of 3...d4 practically forces White to play 3.d4, with a transposition to the **Queen's Gambit**.

It is for this reason that White more often chooses **2.♘f3** and after **2...d5** (or 2...♘f6), we are in positions previously discussed in the section on the **Réti**.

F) 1. ... c7-c6



Also here it is apparent that Black's plan is to play ...d7-d5.

2. ♘b1-c3

The alternatives lead to a number of transpositions:

1) 2.♘f3 d5 – **Réti**
2) 2.d4 d5 – **Slav** (Vol. 2)
3) 2.e4 d5 – a minor line of the **Caro-Kann** (Vol. 1).

2. ... d7-d5
3. e2-e3

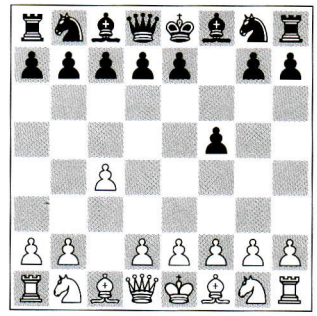
3.d4 leads into the **Slav** with 3.♘c3.

3. ... ♘g8-f6

At this point White does not have anything better than to enter the **Réti** with 4.♘f3 or the **Slav** with 4.d4.

English against the Dutch

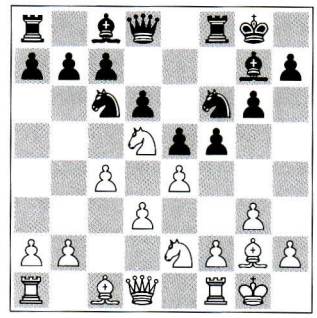
G) 1. ... f7-f5



Black wishes to establish a Dutch-type set-up. d2-d4 will now transpose to the **Dutch** proper (1.d4 f5, Vol. 2).
At this point there is also another interesting idea: playing c2-c4 and not d2-d4, keeping in reserve the option of preparing e2-e4 with d2-d3.

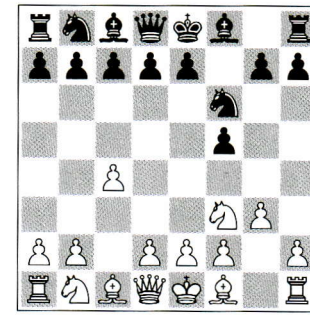
2. ♘g1-f3

Stopping ...e7-e5. The move 2.g3 could be nice, with perhaps the knight going to e2. Indeed, the formation created by g3, ♗g2, ♘ge2 and e4 (a favourite way for Botvinnik to play the **English**) proves to be particularly tricky for Black if he too fianchettoes on the kingside. After 2...♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 (3...e5! with the plan of developing the bishop on b4 or c5 is probably better) 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.d3!? d6 6.e4 e5 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.♘d5



White has scored excellently from this position.

2. ... ♘g8-f6
3. g2-g3

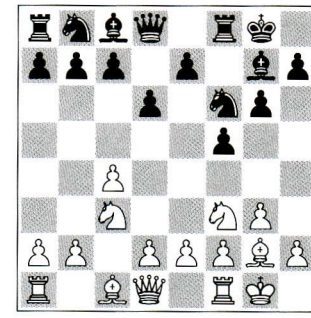


Here, as in a normal Dutch, Black can either fianchetto his bishop or continue classically by playing ...e7-e6.
Now we will take a glance at two lines; for more information please look at the related sections in the chapter on the Dutch in Volume 2.

G1) 3. ... g7-g6

This variation is played along the lines of the **Leningrad Dutch**.

4. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-g7
5. ♗f1-g2 0-0
6. 0-0 d7-d6



Here White can prevent Black from playing ...e7-e5 with **7.d4**, transposing to the **Dutch**; his other option is **7.d3** which

will take him, after Black plays ...e7-e5, into an **English 1...e5**.

G2) **3. ...** **e7-e6**
4. ♗f1-g2 **♗f8-e7**

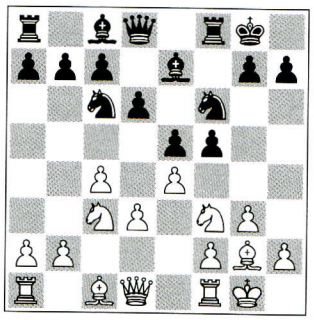
It does not make much sense to establish a Stonewall set-up with 4...d5, when White still has the possibility of controlling e4: after 5.0-0 c6 6.d3! ♗d6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.e4, the opening of the centre helps White's initiative.

5. 0-0 **0-0**
6. ♘b1-c3 **d7-d6**
7. d2-d3

Naturally, transpositions abound: after 7.d4, we are in the **Dutch** (Volume 2).

7. ... **♘b8-c6**
8. e2-e4 **e6-e5**

Black has lost a tempo in comparison to the **English** 1...e5 as it has taken two moves to get the pawn to e5.



9. h2-h3 **♔g8-h8**
10. e4xf5!? **♗c8xf5**
11. d3-d4

White's position is slightly preferable.

Agrest,Evgeny
Kanep,Meelis
Plovdiv Ech-tt 2003 (9)

1.c4 e6 2.♘c3 b6 3.e4 ♗b7 4.♘f3 ♗b4 5.♗d3 ♘e7 6.♘e2 ♘bc6 7.a3 ♗d6 8.♗c2 f5 9.d4 fxe4 10.♗xe4 0-0 11.♕c2 ♘f5 12.h4 h5 13.♗g5 ♕e8 14.0-0-0 ♖b8 15.♖he1 ♘a5 16.d5 ♗a6 17.♘ed4 ♘xd4 18.♖xd4 e5 19.♗d3 b5 20.c5 ♗xc5 21.♖xe5 ♕xe5 22.♘xe5 ♗xd4 23.♗h7+ ♔h8 24.♘g6+ ♔xh7 25.♘e7+ ♔h8 26.♕g6 ♘b3+ 27.♔b1 1-0

Provotorov,Ivan
Chernyshov,Konstantin
Voronezh 2004 (1)

1.c4 b6 2.e4 ♗b7 3.♘c3 e6 4.♘f3 ♗b4 5.♕b3 ♘a6 6.♗e2 ♘e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 f5 9.e5 ♘g6 10.a3 ♗c5 11.♗g5 ♕c8 12.♖ad1 h6 13.♗c1 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♘h4 15.d4 ♘xf3+ 16.gxf3 ♗e7 17.♘e2 c6 18.♔h1 ♘c7 19.♖g1 ♔h7 20.♖g2 ♖g8 21.♖dg1 ♕e8 22.♕e3 g5 23.h4 ♕f7 24.♖h2 ♔g7 25.♘f4 ♔f8 26.♘h3 f4 27.♕e4 b5 28.♖hg2 ♖h8 29.♗xf4 bxc4 30.♗d2 ♘d5 31.f4 gxh4 32.f5 exf5 33.♕f3 ♖b8 34.♖g6 ♖b3 35.♗c3 a5 36.e6 dxe6 37.♘f4 ♗f6 38.♖xf6 ♕xf6 39.♖g6 ♕f7 40.♘xe6+ 1-0

Polugaevsky,Lev
Tal,Mikhail
Moscow ch-URS 1973 (3)

1.c4 g6 2.e4 e5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 6.♘bxd2 d6 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.♘xe5 ♕e7 9.f4 ♘bd7 10.♘xd7 ♗xd7 11.e5 0-0-0 12.♗e2 ♗c6 13.exf6 ♕e3 14.♖f1 ♗xg2 15.♖f2 ♗h3 16.♕c1 ♖he8 17.♘f1 ♕e6 18.♕c3 ♗g4 19.♘g3 h5 20.♖d1 h4 21.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 22.f5 gxf5 23.♕d3+ ♔c8 24.♘xf5 ♕xf6 25.♘e3 ♗xe2 26.♖xe2 ♕g7 27.♘d5 ♕g1+ 28.♔d2 ♕g5+ 29.♔c2 ♖e6 30.♕f3 b5 31.♖g2 ♕e5 32.♖g8+ ♔b7 33.♘c3+ c6 34.cxb5 ♕xh2+ 35.♔b3 1-0

Polugaevsky,Lev
Timman,Jan
Bugojno 1980 (10)

1.c4 g6 2.e4 e5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘f3 exd4 5.e5 ♗b4+ 6.♗d2 ♕e7 7.♗xb4 ♕xb4+ 8.♕d2 ♕xd2+ 9.♘bxd2 ♘h5 10.♘xd4 ♘c6 11.♘xc6 dxc6 12.0-0-0 ♗f5 13.f3 ♘g7 14.g4 ♗e6 15.♘e4 h5 16.h4 ♔e7 17.♗e2 ♖ad8 18.♖xd8 ♖xd8 19.♘f6 ♗c8 20.b3 ♘e6 21.gxh5 ♘f4 22.♗f1 gxh5 23.♖g1 ♗f5 24.♖g5 ♗g6 25.♘e4 ♖d4 26.♘g3 ♘e6 27.♘f5+ ♗xf5 28.♖xf5 ♖xh4 29.♔d2 ♖h2+ 30.♔e3 ♖xa2 31.♖xh5 ♖b2 32.f4 ♖xb3+ 33.♔e4 ♘c5+ 34.♔d4 ♖f3 35.♔xc5 ♖xf1 36.f5 ♖f4 37.♔b4 ♖e4 38.e6 fxe6 39.♖h7+ ♔d6 0-1

Kunte,Abhijit
Malaniuk,Vladimir
Koszalin 1998 (3)

1.c4 f5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 d6 5.e3 ♗g7 6.♘ge2 e5 7.d3 a5 8.a3 c6 9.♖b1 ♘a6 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 ♘c7 12.b5 c5 13.0-0 0-0 14.♗d2 ♖b8 15.b6 ♘a6 16.♘d5 ♘xd5 17.♗xd5+ ♔h8 18.♕b3 g5 19.f4 ♕e7 20.♗g2 ♗e6 21.♘c3 gxf4 22.exf4 ♘b4 23.♘b5 exf4 24.♗xf4 ♗e5 25.♗xe5+ dxe5 26.♕c3 ♗d7 27.♘c7 ♕d6 28.♖fe1 ♕xb6 29.♘d5 ♘xd5 30.♕xe5+ ♕f6 31.♗xd5 b5 32.cxb5 ♕xe5 33.♖xe5 ♗xb5 34.♗c4 ♗xc4 35.♖xb8 ♖xb8 36.dxc4 ♖b1+ 37.♔f2 ♖b2+ 38.♔e3 ♖xh2 39.♖xf5 ♔g7 40.♖xc5 ♔f6 41.g4 ♖g2 42.♖f5+ ♔e6 43.♔f4 ♖f2+ 44.♔e4 ♖e2+ 45.♔d4 ♖d2+ 46.♔c5 ♖g2 47.♖h5 ♖xg4 48.♖xh7 ♖g8 49.♔c6 ♖c8+ 50.♖c7 ♖a8 51.c5 1-0

Jaracz,Pawel
Froeyman,Helmut
Cappelle-la-Grande 2005 (3)

1.c4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♘f3 d5 5.0-0 c6 6.d3 ♗e7 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♕c2 ♘a6 9.a3 ♗d7 10.e4 ♗e8 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.exf5 exf5 13.♗e3 ♗f7 14.♘b5 ♕d7 15.♘bd4 ♘g4 16.♗f4 ♖ac8 17.♕d2 g6 18.♖fe1 ♖fe8 19.h3 ♘f6 20.♗e5 ♘c5 21.♖e2 ♕a4 22.♘xf5 gxf5 23.♕g5+ ♗g6 24.♗xf6 ♗xf6 25.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 26.♕xf6 ♘xd3 27.♘h4 1-0

De Santis,Alessio
Naumkin,Igor
Verona open 2006 (7)

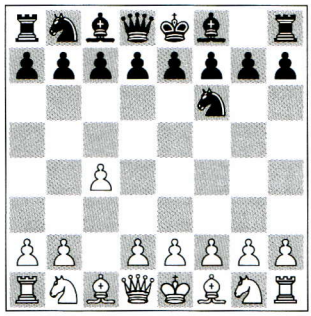
1.♘f3 e6 2.g3 f5 3.♗g2 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♗e7 5.c4 0-0 6.♘c3 d6 7.d3 e5 8.♖b1 ♕e8 9.b4 ♕h5 10.♘d5 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 c6 12.dxc6 ♘xc6 13.b5 ♘d8 14.a4 ♘f7 15.♗a3 f4 16.a5 fxg3 17.fxg3 a6 18.bxa6 ♖xa6 19.♖b5 ♗d8 20.♕b3 ♖e8 21.♘d2 ♗xa5 22.♗d5 ♖f8 23.♘c4 ♗c7 24.♘xe5 ♖xa3 25.♘xf7 ♖xb3 26.♘h6+ 1-0

Brancaleoni,Maurizio
Garofalo,Sergio
Piacenza 2005 (3)

1.c4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 e6 4.♗g2 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.♘c3 c6 8.e4 e5 9.c5 ♕e8 10.♖e1 ♕h5 11.♘d2 ♘g4 12.h3 ♘f6 13.♕xh5 ♘xh5 14.exf5 d5 15.d4 ♖xf5 16.g4 ♖xf2 17.♖xe5 ♖xg2+ 18.♔xg2 ♘f4+ 19.♔f3 ♘e6 20.♘b3 ♗f6 21.♖e2 ♘a6 22.♗e3 ♗d7 23.♔g2 ♖f8 24.a3 ♘axc5 25.♘xc5 ♘xc5 26.dxc5 d4 27.♖d1 1-0

English 1...♘f6

1. c2-c4 ♘g8-f6



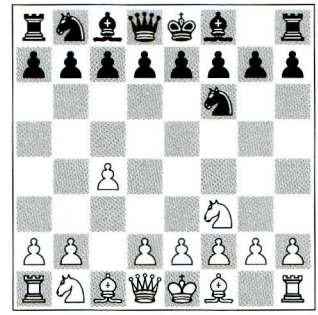
1...♘f6 is an elastic move: after this move Black can still use any defence he chooses (with the exception of the Dutch!), but before deciding he would like to see which knight White develops first.

We will now discuss lines with **2.♘f3** and then we will examine those that begin with **2.♘c3.**

Of course, after 2.d4 you transpose to one of the **Indian defences**. On the other hand, many transpositions are possible after 2.g3, but the most reliable for Black is considered to be 2...c6 3.♘f3 d5, going into a Réti.

Lines with 2.♘f3

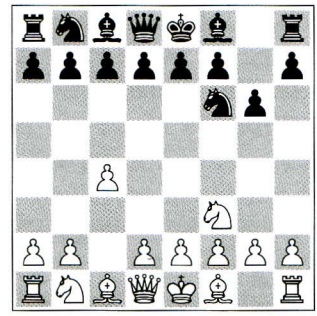
1. c2-c4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘g1-f3



Black now has many paths he can follow: after 2...c6 we are in the **Réti**, 2...c5 creates the **Symmetrical English**, *while 2...d5?! is dubious for the reasons given previously.*

King's Indian set-up 1 with ♘f3 and ...♘f6

2. ... g7-g6



Black is steering the game towards a possible **Grünfeld** or **King's Indian**, encouraged by the fact that the development of the knight to f3 reduces White's options.

However, White can stay within the realm of the English with

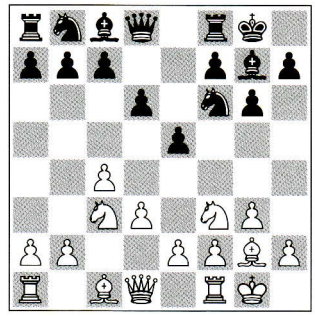
3. g2-g3 ♗f8-g7
4. ♗f1-g2 0-0
5. 0-0 d7-d6

After 5...c5 we have a **Symmetrical English**, whereas 5...d5 usually results in a **Grünfeld**.

6. ♘b1-c3

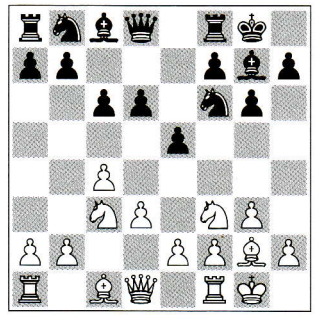
The advance d2-d4, now or on the next move, transposes to the **Fianchetto Variation** of the **King's Indian**.

6. ... e7-e5
7. d2-d3



The Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings (ECO) classifies this as part of the **English 1...e5**, but given that the position is more commonly reached with 1...♘f6, we prefer to discuss it here.

A) 7. ... c7-c6



Preparing the ambitious pawn advance ...d6-d5.

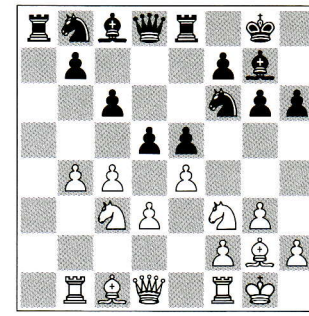
8. ♖a1-b1 ♖f8-e8
9. e2-e4!?

After 9.b4, 9...d5 would appear to give Black a decent game.

9. ... a7-a5

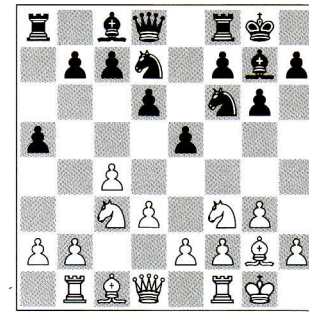
The move 9...a6!? is more of a surprise, but at the cost of allowing White to apply unpleasant pressure on the queenside after 10.b4 b5 11.a4.

10. a2-a3 h7-h6
11. b2-b4 a5xb4
12. a3xb4 d6-d5



At first glance Black's centre looks nice, but his backward development is cause for concern.

B) 7. ... ♘b8-d7
8. ♖a1-b1 a7-a5



Usually Black initiates a pawn exchange on the a-file before beginning aggressive actions on the kingside, but it is still unclear if this has more pluses or minuses. It may be true that he no longer runs the risk of losing the a7 pawn with the predictable rook invasion on b7. On the other hand, the open a-file could prove to be a clear path for a quick deployment of White's major pieces.

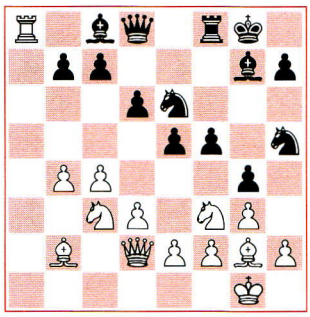
As this is no minor consideration, it is well worth thinking about the immediate 8...♘c5 or 8...♘h5.

9. a2-a3 ♘d7-c5!?

With its eye on the e6-square, from where it will control g5 and d4.

Another typical way to proceed is 9...♘h5 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 h6 12.♕b3 ♔h8 13.♗d2 f5 14.♖a1 ♖xa1 15.♖xa1; as is so often the case with these lines, White's initiative on the queenside is more advanced, but Black has a more appealing target as White's royal residence is on the kingside!

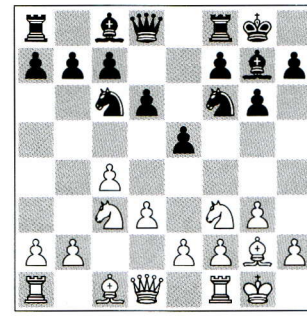
10. b2-b4 a5xb4
11. a3xb4 ♘c5-e6
12. ♗c1-b2 ♘f6-h5
13. ♕d1-d2 f7-f5
14. ♖b1-a1 ♖a8xa1
15. ♖f1xa1 g6-g5
16. ♖a1-a8 g5-g4



with an unclear game.

C) 7. ... ♘b8-c6

The most natural and popular move, despite the fact that a black knight on c6 encourages the pawn march b2-b4-b5.



This is one of the key positions in the English Opening.

There is no contact between White's forces and Black's, and neither side seems to want to make a move to decisively occupy the centre. The real battle lies ahead in the middlegame and the strategic themes are substantially those of the **Closed Sicilian** with a tempo more or less, depending on which side you are playing. However, this factor is not very significant in this type of position.

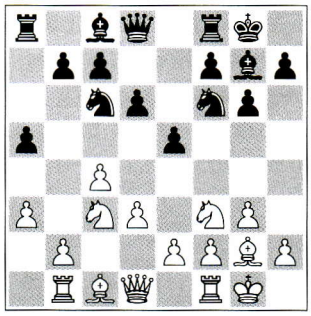
8. ♖a1-b1 a7-a5

Here we can repeat our earlier comment: while this is the most played option, it should not necessarily be presumed that opening up the a-file is the best strategy.

Evidence of this is that the alternatives 8...h6 9.b4 ♗e6 10.b5 ♘e7 11.a4 ♕d7 and 8...♘h5 9.b4 f5 10.b5 ♘e7 have produced slightly better results for Black.

9. a2-a3

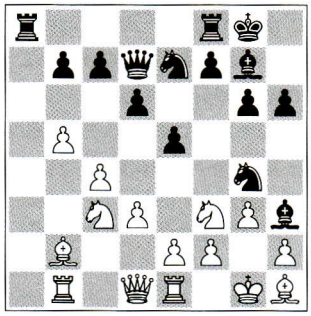
Now Black is at a crossroads.



C1) **9. ...** **h7-h6**
10. b2-b4 **a5xb4**
11. a3xb4 **♗c8-e6**
12. b4-b5 **♘c6-e7**
13. ♗c1-b2 **♕d8-d7**
14. ♖f1-e1

A typical way of preserving the fianchettoed light-squared bishop, which otherwise could be pinned to the rook, with a forced exchange.

14. ... **♗e6-h3**
15. ♗g2-h1 **♘f6-g4**



16. ♖b1-a1

Given Black's initiative on the kingside, it is worth thinking about opening up the centre with 16.d4!?

16. ... **♖a8-b8**

Also here it is hard to predict whether White will be able to invade the queenside before Black starts to threaten the safety of the white king.

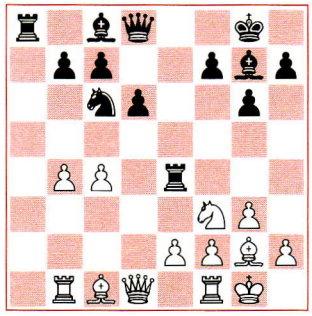
C2) **9. ...** **♖f8-e8**

An interesting alternative plan could be a centre break.

10. b2-b4

If White wishes to stop the pawn march to e4, he can play 10.♗g5!? and concede the advantage of the bishop pair in exchange for a quicker queenside initiative: 10...h6 11.♗xf6 ♗xf6 12.b4 axb4 13.axb4 ♗g7 14.b5.

10. ... **a5xb4**
11. a3xb4 **e5-e4!?**
12. d3xe4 **♘f6xe4**
13. ♘c3xe4 **♖e8xe4**



with a position that is difficult to weigh up.

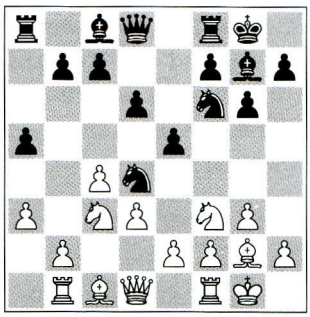
C3) **9. ...** **♘f6-h5**

White's excellent results against this line would indicate that immediate kingside counterplay by Black is premature.

10. b2-b4 **a5xb4**
11. a3xb4 **f7-f5**
12. b4-b5 **♘c6-e7**
13. ♕d1-b3 **♔g8-h8**
14. ♗c1-b2

and White is now ready to launch his invasion of the queenside with ♖a1.

C4) **9. ...** **♘c6-d4**



This is not the most common move, but it has the best performance. Black wants to take some of the pressure off and plans ...c7-c6 and ...d6-d5.

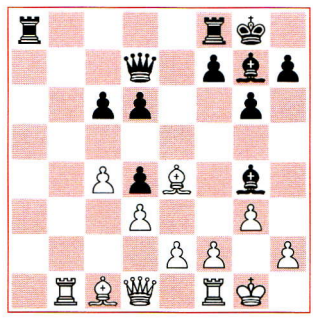
10. b2-b4

The most thematic. However, it could be good to slow down Black's counterplay with 10.♗g5!?, even at the cost of losing the advantage of the two bishops.

Taking on d4 has proved to be ineffective: 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.♘b5 ♘g4 12.h3 c6! 13.hxg4 ♗xg4! and Black wins back the piece; for this reason, the move 9...♘d4 is less good if it is played one move earlier as without a5/a3 the knight would have the a3-square to go to.

Another alternative that avoids the exchange is 10.♘d2, which is followed by 10...c6 11.e3 ♘e6 12.♘f3!? (preventing ...d6-d5) 12...♘c5 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 ♘xd3! 15.♕xd3 e4 16.♘xe4 ♘xe4, with equality (the knight is immune from capture due to ♗f5).

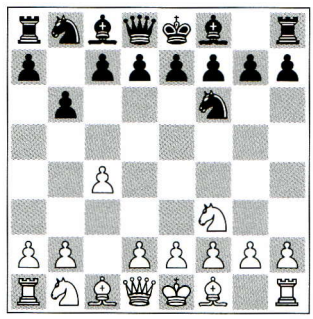
10.	**...**	**a5xb4**
11.	**a3xb4**	**c7-c6**
12.	**b4-b5**	**♗c8-g4**
13.	**b5xc6**	**b7xc6**
14.	**♘f3xd4**	**e5xd4**
15.	**♘c3-e4**	**♘f6xe4**
16.	**♗g2xe4**	**♕d8-d7**



Black has no problems, and indeed the pawn on e2 could become an unpleasant weakness for White.

Queen's Indian set-up 1

1.	**c2-c4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**♘g1-f3**	**b7-b6**



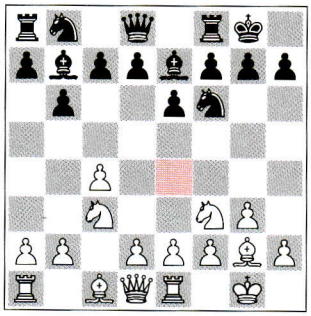
3.	**g2-g3**	**♗c8-b7**
4.	**♗f1-g2**	**e7-e6**

Pushing ...c7-c5, either now or in the following two moves, transposes to the **Symmetrical English Hedgehog**.

5.	**0-0**	**♗f8-e7**
6.	**♘b1-c3**	

Needless to say, if White plays d2-d4 immediately, or on the next move, we go into a **Queen's Indian**, with the plus of having sidestepped the popular 4...♗a6 variation.

6. ... 0-0
7. ♖f1-e1!?



7. ... d7-d5

7...c5 8.e4 transposes to the fashionable **Anti-Hedgehog** line, which we examine further ahead.

8. c4xd5 e6xd5

Black hopes the somewhat misplaced rook on e1 may compensate for the rigid centre.

The more fluid 8...♘xd5 leaves White with an edge after 9.e4 ♘xc3 10.bxc3 c5 11.d4.

9. d2-d4 c7-c5
10. ♗c1-f4

Theory considers this position to be balanced, but White's performance percentage of above 60% is ample evidence that Black's position is more difficult to play.

Romanishin Variation

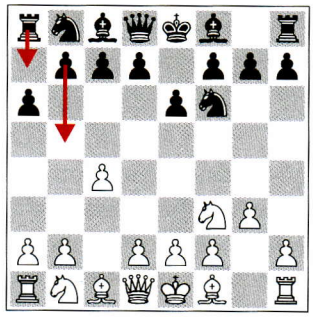
1. c2-c4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘g1-f3 e7-e6
3. g2-g3

For 3.♘c3, see 2.♘c3.

3. ... a7-a6!?

Romanishin came up with this intriguing move in the 1970's.

Black prepares the pawn sacrifice ...b7-b5 and vacates the a7-square for the rook, in light of the threatening g2 bishop. 3...b6 and 3...d5 transpose to lines that have been discussed earlier. 3...c5 will be discussed in the section on the Symmetrical English.



4. ♗f1-g2

4.♘c3 d5 5.d4 dxc4 takes us into a doubtful **Open Catalan** in which the move ...a6 is more useful than ♘c3.

4. ... b7-b5
5. b2-b3

Apart from accepting with 5.axb5 axb5 6.♘d4, 5.d3!? merits attention.

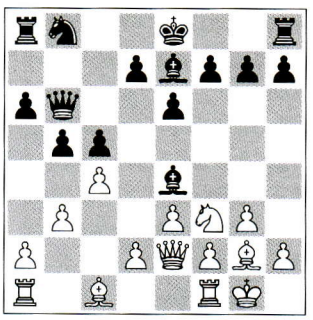
5. ... ♗c8-b7
6. 0-0 c7-c5
7. ♘b1-c3!?

Or 7.♗b2 ♗e7 8.d3 0-0 9.♘bd2 d5=.

7. ... ♕d8-b6!

Better than 7...b4 8.♘a4.

8. e2-e3 ♗f8-e7
9. ♕d1-e2 ♘f6-e4
10. ♘c3xe4 ♗b7xe4



11.	d2-d3	♗e4-b7
12.	♗c1-b2	0-0
13.	d3-d4	d7-d6

White's slightly greater presence in the centre does not look enough to give him a significant advantage.

Chekhover,Vitaly
Bronstein,David
Leningrad ch-URS sf 1947 (7)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 d6 4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.d3 c6 8.♗d2 ♖e8 9.♖c1 h6 10.♕c2 ♘a6 11.♖fd1 ♘c5 12.b4 ♘e6 13.e3 ♘h7 14.d4 ♘eg5 15.♘xg5 ♘xg5 16.d5 cxd5 17.cxd5 ♗g4 18.♖f1 ♘f3+ 19.♔h1 ♘xd2 20.♕xd2 ♕b6 21.a3 ♗d7 22.♖c2 ♖ac8 23.♖fc1 ♖c7 24.♔g1 ♖ec8 25.♗f1 f5 26.♘e2 a6 27.♖xc7 ♖xc7 28.♖xc7 ♕xc7 29.e4 ♔f7 30.♕e3 ♕c8 31.h4 h5 32.exf5 gxf5 33.♕f3 ♔g6 34.♔h2 ♗h6 35.♕d3 ♗b5 36.♕d1 ♔f6 37.a4 ♗e8 38.f4 ♕c4 39.fxe5+ dxe5 40.d6 ♗d7 41.♘f4 ♕a2+ 42.♘g2 ♕d2 43.♕xh5 b5 44.axb5 axb5 45.♗d3 e4 46.♗c2 ♔e5 47.♗b3 ♕xd6 48.♘f4 ♕d2+ 49.♔h3 ♕c1 50.♗d1 ♗xf4 51.gxf4+ ♔d6 52.♕e2 ♕xf4 53.♕h2 ♕xh2+ 54.♔xh2 ♔e5 55.h5 ♔f6 56.♔g3 ♔g5 57.♔f2 f4 58.♔g2 ♗e8 59.♗c2 ♗c6 60.♗d1 e3+ 0-1

Kramnik,Vladimir
Polgar,Judit
Madrid 1993 (7)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.♘c3 d6 6.0-0 e5 7.d3 c6 8.♖b1 ♖e8 9.e4 d5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.♗g5 dxe4 12.dxe4 ♘c6 13.♕xd8 ♖xd8 14.♘d5 ♖d6 15.♘d2 ♘xd5 16.exd5 ♘d4 17.♘c4 ♖a6 18.d6 ♖xa2 19.♖a1 ♖xa1 20.♖xa1 ♗e6 21.♘a5 ♖c8 22.♘xb7 ♖c2 23.♖xa7 h6 24.♗e3 ♖xb2 25.h3 ♖b6 26.♔h2 g5 27.♖a8+ ♔h7 28.♖e8 ♔g6 29.♗e4+ ♔f6 30.g4 ♖a6 31.♗d3 ♖c6 32.♗e4 ♖c8 33.♖xc8 ♗xc8 34.♘c5 ♗e6 35.♗d2 ♘b3 36.♘xb3 ♗xb3 37.d7 ♔e7 38.♗c6 ♗f6 39.♗a5 ♔d6 40.♗b5 ♗c2 41.d8♕+ ♗xd8 42.♗xd8 f5 43.gxf5 ♗xf5 44.♗f6 ♔e6 45.♗g7 h5 46.♗c4+ 1-0

Ree,Hans
Polugaevsky,Lev
Amsterdam IBM 1970 (4)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.♘c3 d6 6.d3 e5 7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.♖b1 a5 9.a3 c6 10.♘d2 ♘b6 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 d5 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♘b3 d4 15.♘e4 ♘xe4 16.dxe4 ♘a4 17.♗d2 b6 18.♘c1 ♗e6 19.♘d3 ♘c3 20.♗xc3 dxc3 21.♕c2 ♕d4 22.♖a1 ♗c4 23.♖fb1 ♗xd3 24.exd3 ♖xa1 25.♖xa1 b5 26.♖b1 ♖c8 27.♗f3 ♗f8 28.♗d1 ♗xb4 29.♕e2 ♖c6 30.♕e3 ♗c5 31.♕xd4 ♗xd4 32.♗b3 c2 33.♖c1 ♖c3 34.♗xc2 b4 0-1

Hübner,Robert
Ree,Hans
Paignton 1970 (1)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d3 d6 5.g3 g6 6.♗g2 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♖b1 ♘d4 9.b4 a6 10.♘d2 c6 11.a4 d5 12.b5 axb5 13.axb5 ♗f5 14.bxc6 bxc6 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.♘b3 ♘xb3 17.♖xb3 ♗e6 18.d4 e4 19.♗a3 ♖e8 20.♕d2 ♕d7 21.♗c5 ♗h3 22.♕f4

h5 23.♖fb1 ♕f5 24.♗xh3 ♕xh3 25.♖b7 ♔h7 26.♕g5 ♘g4 27.♕h4 ♕xh4 28.gxh4 ♔g8 29.♘xd5 ♖a2 30.h3 ♘h6 31.♖b8 ♖xb8 32.♖xb8+ ♔h7 33.♘c3 ♖a1+ 34.♔h2 ♘f5 35.e3 ♗h6 36.♘xe4 ♖a2 37.♘f6+ ♔g7 38.♗f8+ 1-0

Anand,Viswanathan
Touzane,Olivier
Moscow Wch-match rapid 2001 (1)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.0-0 d6 6.♘c3 e5 7.d3 ♘c6 8.♖b1 a5 9.a3 h6 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 ♗e6 12.b5 ♘e7 13.♗b2 ♕d7 14.♖e1 ♗h3 15.♗h1 ♘g4 16.♕b3 ♔h7 17.♘e4 ♕f5 18.b6 ♕h5 19.bxc7 f5 20.♘xd6 f4 21.♕xb7 fxg3 22.hxg3 ♗f1 23.♘h4 g5 24.♕e4+ ♔g8 25.♗f3 ♗h3 26.♗xg4 ♗xg4 27.♘g2 ♖a6 28.♗xe5 ♘c8 29.c5 ♖a7 30.♗xg7 ♔xg7 31.♘e3 ♗d7 32.c6 ♗h3 33.♘xc8 ♗xc8 34.♕d4+ ♔g6 35.♕xa7 1-0

Polugaevsky,Lev
Kortchnoi,Viktor
Riga tt 1975

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d3 g6 5.g3 ♗g7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 d6 8.♖b1 a5 9.a3 h6 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 ♗e6 12.b5 ♘e7 13.♗b2 ♘d7 14.♘d2 c6 15.e4 f5 16.exf5 gxf5 17.f4 ♘g6 18.♔h1 ♕c8 19.♘b3 exf4 20.gxf4 ♘f6 21.♕d2 ♔h7 22.♖a1 ♖xa1 23.♖xa1 ♘h4 24.♖g1 ♖g8 25.♘d4 ♗d7 26.bxc6 bxc6 27.♘f3 ♘xg2 28.♕xg2 ♕e8 29.♖e1 ♕f7 30.c5 ♘h5 31.♕d2 dxc5 32.♘e5 ♗xe5 33.♖xe5 ♕g7 34.♕f2 ♘xf4 35.♖e3 ♕g2+ 36.♕xg2 ♖xg2 37.♖e7+ ♔g6 38.♖xd7 ♖xb2 39.♔g1 ♖g2+ 40.♔f1 ♖xh2 41.♖c7 ♘xd3 0-1

Bareev,Evgeny
Bacrot,Etienne
Sarajevo 2000 (4)

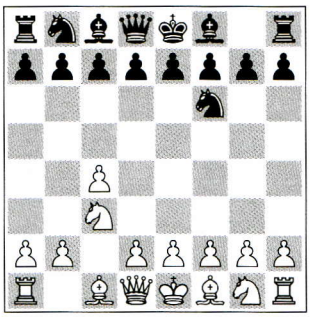
1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.d3 d6 8.♖b1 a5 9.a3 h6 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 ♗e6 12.b5 ♘e7 13.♕b3 c6 14.♗a3 ♖e8 15.♖fc1 g5 16.e3 ♗f5 17.♘e1 ♗e6 18.♘c2 d5 19.♗xe7 ♖xe7 20.♘b4 dxc4 21.dxc4 cxb5 22.♘bd5 ♗xd5 23.♘xd5 ♘xd5 24.cxd5 e4 25.♖c5 ♖c8 26.♖xb5 ♖e5 27.♖d1 ♖c7 28.♗h3 ♕f6 29.d6 ♖xb5 30.♕xb5 ♖c2 31.♗f5 ♗f8 32.d7 ♗e7 33.d8♖+ ♗xd8 34.♕e8+ ♔g7 35.♖xd8 ♖c1+ 36.♔g2 ♕xf5 37.♕f8+ ♔g6 38.♖d6+ 1-0

Granda Zuniga,Julio
Romanishin,Oleg
Moscow Aeroflot 2003 (4)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 a6 4.♗g2 b5 5.b3 ♗b7 6.♘c3 b4 7.♘a4 d6 8.d4 ♘bd7 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♘e1 ♗xg2 11.♘xg2 0-0 12.d5 exd5 13.cxd5 ♘e4 14.♗e3 ♗f6 15.♖c1 ♘b6 16.♘xb6 cxb6 17.♖c6 b5 18.♗b6 ♕d7 19.♕d3 ♖fe8 20.♗a5 ♘c3 21.♗xb4 ♘xe2+ 22.♔h1 a5 23.♖xd6 ♕h3 24.♖xf6 gxf6 25.♗c5 ♖e5 26.♖d1 ♖ae8 0-1

Lines with 2.♘c3

1. c2-c4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3



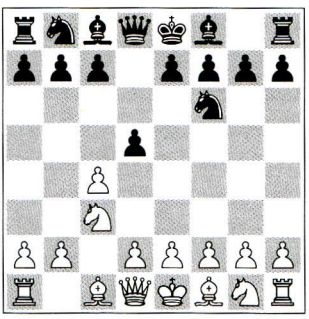
With **2.♘c3**, White increases his immediate control of the centre, with the option of a later e2-e4.

- 2...c5 transposes to 1...c5.
- 2...e5 and we are in 1...e5.

Here we will look at independent lines.

The Grünfeld set-up

2. ... d7-d5



In the spirit of the **Grünfeld**, Black plays ...d7-d5 before White rules it out permanently with e2-e4.

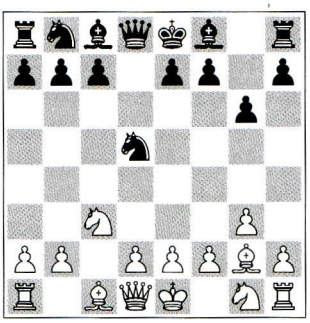
3. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5

At this point 4.d4 leads into the **Exchange Variation** of the **Grünfeld**, whereas the two lines that follow will be more to the taste of an **English Opening** aficionado.

A) 4. g2-g3 g7-g6

The moves 4...e5 and 4...c5 transpose to their respective lines in the English Opening.

5. ♗f1-g2



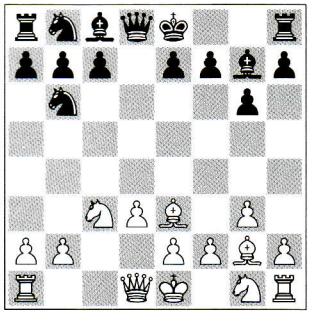
In this position there are two plausible ways to continue: 5...♘b6 and 5...♘xc3.

A1) 5. ... ♘d5-b6
6. d2-d3

6.d4 is the **Fianchetto Variation of the Grünfeld Indian**. It is also possible to interpose 6.h4!? h6 before playing d2-d3.

Obviously, 6.♘f3 is playable as well, and you arrive at a balanced position after 6...♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3. However, White usually would like to maintain the option of the ambitious ♗xc6+, followed by ♗e3 / ♕d2 / ♗h6 / h4 / h5.

6. ... ♗f8-g7
7. ♗c1-e3!?



7. ... ♘b8-c6

Black is not worried about doubled pawns on the c-file.

On the other hand, 7...0-0 is risky because of 8.♕d2 ♖e8 (like the **Dragon Variation** of the **Sicilian**!) 9.♗h6 ♗h8 10.h4, with a dangerous initiative.

8. ♗g2xc6+

Conceding the powerful bishop in order to create a weakness. After 8.♕d2 ♘d4! 9.♖c1 ♘f5, Black has no problems.

8. ... b7xc6

9. ♕d1-c1!?

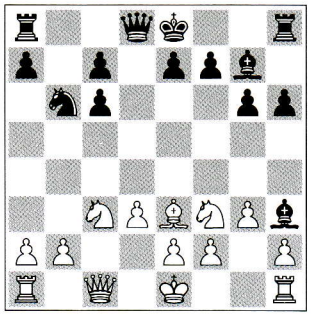
In preparation for ♗h6. The queen move keeps the d2-square available for the e3 bishop in the event of ...♘d5, and allows her to apply pressure to c6.

The more natural 9.♕d2 is also playable.

9. ... h7-h6

10. ♘g1-f3 ♗c8-h3

Weak light squares are the price White must pay for his better pawn structure.



11. ♖h1-g1 ♗h3-g4

with an unclear position that is hard to assess.

A2) 5. ... ♘d5xc3

6. b2xc3 ♗f8-g7

7. ♖a1-b1!?

More aggressive players will find 7.h4 an attractive alternative.

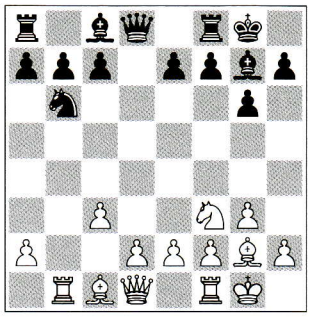
7. ... ♘b8-d7

8. ♘g1-f3

8.♗xb7? is clearly not on as it would be met by 8...♗xb7 9.♖xb7 ♘b6, and the rook on b7 is trapped.

8. ... 0-0

9. 0-0 ♘d7-b6!



9...c5 would be followed by 10.c4, with a small plus for White.

10. ♕d1-c2

with a balanced game.

This position is an oddity: two empty ranks separate the opposing forces, which huddle together on their first three ranks. This does not mean that the game will be lifeless; the battle lies ahead.

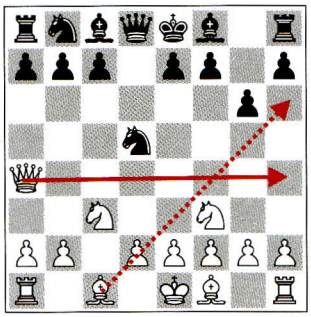
After all, the initial position of a chess game is also virtually symmetrical, but with four ranks still vacant in the centre, there is nothing drawish about it!

B) 4. ♘g1-f3 g7-g6

You will often arrive at this position after 1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5.

4...c5 will be discussed in the section on the **Symmetrical English** further on in this book.

5. ♕d1-a4+



An insidious line that has always attracted a loyal group of supporters.

- 5.g3 transposes to a number of other defences;
- 5.d4 creates a Grünfeld;
- 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.dxc3!? ♕xd1+ 7.♔xd1 f6! is harmless;
- The following interesting variation is ever more popular: 5.♕b3!? ♘b6 6.d4 ♗g7 7.♗g5, and we are now in comparatively unexplored territory.

5. ... ♗c8-d7

Easily the most frequent move.

After 5...♘c6, according to established theory, White is better thanks to 6.♘e5 ♘b4 7.a3 ♗g7! 8.axb4 ♗xe5 9.b5. However, after 9...♘b8! an advantage is not so evident.

Also the alternative 5...c6 6.♕d4! ♘f6 7.♕xd8+ ♔xd8, though hardly anything to write home about, does not seem to be so terrible for Black.

6. ♕a4-h4

Here we have the main idea of the present variation: the queen menacingly shifts to the kingside, where Black's castled king will be more vulnerable due to the absence of the knight on f6.

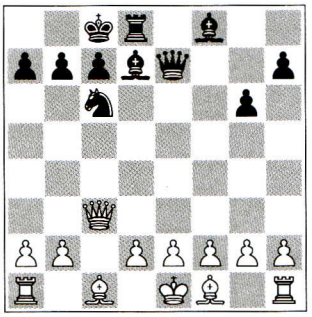
6. ... ♘d5xc3

6...♘f6 7.e4 gives White the advantage, whereas after 6...♗c6 7.♕d4! (the queen continues to slide around the board) 7...f6 8.e3 White is only slightly better.

7. d2xc3

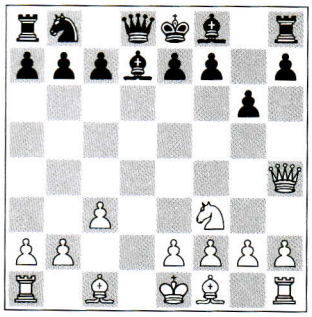
Capturing this way immediately liberates the c1 bishop.

Things are not so clear after 7.♕d4!?: 7...f6 8.♕xc3 e5! 9.♘xe5 fxe5 10.♕xe5+ ♕e7 11.♕xh8 ♘c6 12.♕c3 0-0-0.



Being up the exchange and two pawns represents a very nice material plus, but White's lack of development – all of his pieces are on the first rank – is cause for great concern.

Assessing this position is no easy task, which is reflected in the diverse evaluations given by the different chess engines: some see it as equal, others give White a net advantage, for others still White is winning!



7. ... ♘b8-c6

More accurate than 7...♗g7?!, which allows 8.♗h6, with a strong attack.

8. e2-e4

Now after 8.♗h6, 8...e5! is possible, and Black does not have any worries.

But 8.♕g3!? definitely should be considered; though not so common, it has achieved good performance results.

8. ... e7-e5!

9. ♗c1-g5

9.♕xd8+ doesn't gain anything for White.

9. ... ♗f8-e7

10. ♗f1-c4 h7-h5

10...0-0? 11.0-0-0 ♗xg5+ 12.♘xg5 h5 13.g4, with a decisive advantage.

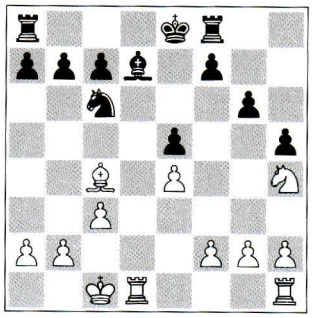
11. ♗g5xe7

Black's threat was ...f7-f6 / ...g6-g5.

11. ... ♕d8xe7

12. 0-0-0 ♕e7xh4

13. ♘f3xh4 ♖h8-f8

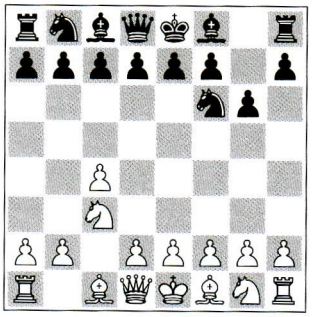


After 0-0-0, Black has nothing to fear.

King's Indian set-up 2 with ...♘f6 but without ♘f3

1. c2-c4 ♘g8-f6

2. ♘b1-c3 g7-g6



One of the most common ways to continue, especially for **King's Indian** fans.

3. g2-g3

Whereas this move is more likely to be played by a devotee of the **English Opening**.

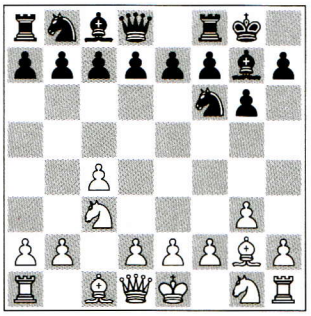
White's intention is to place the bishop on its natural diagonal, keeping open the option of developing the king's knight to e2.

3.e4 is the choice of a 1.c4 player who wishes to avoid the **Grünfeld** but is happy to take on the King's Indian.

3.♘f3 will usually lead to a **King's Indian** or an **English/Grünfeld**, as discussed in the previous section. A line with its own distinct identity is 3...d5 4.♕a4+!? (instead of 4.cxd5) 4...♗d7 5.♕b3 dxc4 6.♕xc4 ♗g7 7.e4 0-0 8.e5 ♘g4 9.d4, with complex play that is reminiscent of the **Russian Variation** of the **Grünfeld**.

3. ... ♗f8-g7

4. ♗f1-g2 0-0



Black cannot advance his pawn to d5, and after ...d6 the position assumes the characteristics of the **King's Indian**.

Now – ignoring 5.♘f3, which leads to lines we have just discussed – White almost always develops his knight to e2 and can choose between various central pawn configurations: e3/d3, e3/d4 or d3/e4. Remember that d4/e4 transposes to the **Fianchetto Variation** of the **King's Indian**.

5.d3 is also possible at this point, and after 5...d6 we are in one of the two alternatives below, depending on whether White pushes his king's pawn one or two squares.

A line with its own individual identity is created by Gurevich's move 6.♗g5!?, which will be followed by ♕d2/♗h6-/h4/h5. However, the idea is too ambitious to have concrete chances of success. Well, that is what theory states; in practice anything could happen!

A) 5. e2-e4

The move favoured by Botvinnik.

5. ... d7-d6

6. ♘g1-e2

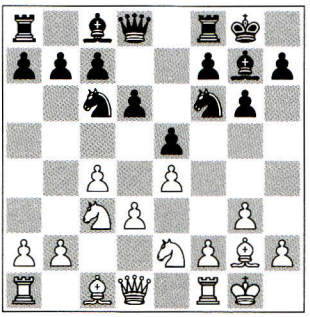
With this sequence, Black now has the option of switching to a satisfactory **Symmetrical English** variation with 6...c5!? 7.d3 (7.d4 does not give White much) 7...♘c6 8.0-0. For this reason, many prefer to establish this e4/c4 line only after Black has played ...e7-e5.

6. ... e7-e5

7. 0-0 ♘b8-c6

Probably the best reply to 7...c6 is to transpose to a **King's Indian** with 8.d4!.

8. d2-d3



Also this position, like the many in which Black establishes a **King's Indian** like set-up, is classified as belonging to the **English 1...e5** (ECO code A26).

We would rather deal with it here in order to underline its distinct nature: indeed, with 1...♘f6, Black is denied the opportunity to directly advance his pawn to f5 or to develop his knight to e7 (or h6).

8. ... ♘f6-h5

8...♗e6 9.h3 ♕d7 10.♔h2 ♘e8 11.♘d5 f5 12.exf5 gxf5 13.f4 generates a double-edged position, in which White's control of the centre gives him somewhat better chances.

9. ♗c1-e3 f7-f5

10. e4xf5!

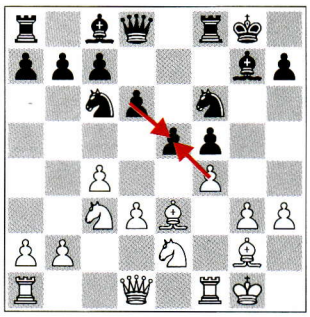
Given that Black's pieces are slightly decentralized, White's wisest strategy is to open up the game.

10. ... g6xf5

As is always the case in this sort of position, recapturing with a piece leaves the

important e4-square in White's hands: after 10...♗xf5 11.h3 ♘f6 12.♕d2 ♕d7 13.♔h2, White's position is slightly preferable.

11. f2-f4 ♘h5-f6
12. h2-h3



The game is balanced, even if you do get the impression that after a timely fxe5 the hanging pawns on f5 and e5 are more of a weakness than a strength.

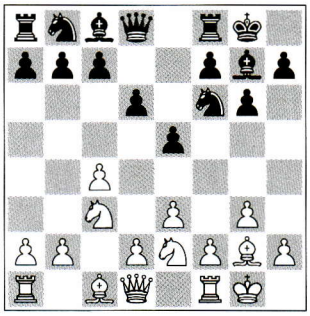
B) 5. e2-e3

The king's knight will hop to e2, permitting the prophylactic f4 when appropriate, whereas the queen's pawn can go either to d3 or to d4, depending on what set-up Black goes for.

5. ... d7-d6
6. ♘g1-e2 e7-e5

6...c5 7.d4 has scored very nicely for White.

7. 0-0



7. ... ♘b8-c6

The number 1 choice, but obviously the alternatives 7...c6 and 7...♘bd7 are playable.

While it is true that the presence of the knight on c6 discourages a d2-d4 advance, it is equally true that the knight on this square encourages the thematic push b4-b5.

8. d2-d3

After 8.d4 exd4 9.exd4 ♗f5, Black has achieved very good results.

8. ... ♗c8-e6
9. ♘c3-d5

Physically preventing the pawn from occupying d5.

In reply to the thematic 9.♖b1, the move 9...d5!? appears to free Black's game.

9. ... ♕d8-d7
10. ♖a1-b1

Preserving the light-squared bishop with 10.♖e1 ♗h3 11.♗h1 would give Black satisfactory counterplay with 11...h5.

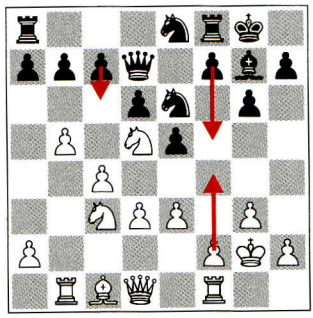
10. ... ♗e6-h3
11. ♘e2-c3!

11.b4 would allow 11...♗xg2 12.♔xg2 ♘xd5! 13.cxd5 ♘e7 14.e4 c6! (freeing himself of the weakness on c7) 15.dxc6 bxc6, with pleasant play for Black.

11. ... ♗h3xg2
12. ♔g1xg2 ♘f6-e8
13. b2-b4 ♘c6-d8!?

Two backward knights are also a characteristic of the mirror-image **Closed Sicilian**; with ...c7-c6 Black wants to give the d5 knight a kick without permitting it to be exchanged for his own knight.

14. b4-b5 ♘d8-e6



Black intends to play ...c7-c6 and ...f7-f5-f4; for his part, White will take appropriate prophylactic measures (e.g. the advance f2-f4), and then continue with his queenside initiative.
Over the board, chances are the same for both colours.

Epishin,Vladimir
Lujan,Carolina
San Marino open 2006 (4)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♘xd5 4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♖b1 ♘c6 8.h4 h6 9.d4 0-0 10.♘f3 ♘a5 11.e4 c5 12.0-0 b6 13.♕e2 cxd4 14.cxd4 ♗g4 15.d5 ♕c8 16.♗b2 ♕c4 17.♕e3 ♕xa2 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♘e5 ♗e2 20.♖fe1 ♘c4 21.♕c3 ♕d2 22.♕a1 ♔h7 23.♖xe2 ♕xe2 24.♗f1 ♕xe4 25.♗xc4 ♖ac8 26.♖e1 ♕c2 27.♖e2 ♕f5 28.♗d3 ♕f6 29.h5 ♖fd8 30.hxg6+ fxg6 31.♕a2 ♖c3 32.♕d2 ♖c5 33.♘xg6 ♖cxd5 34.♖xe7+ ♕xe7 35.♘xe7+ ♖xd3 36.♕f4 1-0

Tomashevsky,Evgeny
Vokarev,Sergey
Sochi tt 2005 (4)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♘xd5 4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 ♘b6 6.d3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 ♖e8 9.♗h6 ♗h8 10.h4 ♘8d7 11.h5 ♘f6 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.♗f3 c6 14.♕f4 ♘bd5 15.♕h4 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 e5 17.♔f1 ♕e7 18.♗g5 ♗g7 19.♔g2 ♕e6 20.e4 ♔f8 21.♗h6 ♘g8 22.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 23.♗e2 ♕f6 24.♕h7+ ♔f8 25.♖f1 ♕g7 26.f4 ♕xh7 27.♖xh7 ♘f6 28.♖h8+ ♘g8 29.♘f3 ♗g4 30.fxe5 ♗xf3+ 31.♗xf3 ♖xe5 32.♗d1 ♔g7 33.♖fh1 ♖f8 34.♖1h7+ ♔f6 35.♗b3 ♔e7 36.♖g7 1-0

Pelletier,Yannick
Sutovsky,Emil
Pamplona 2003 (2)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♕b3 ♘b6 6.d4 ♗g7 7.♗g5 ♗e6 8.♕c2 ♘c6 9.♖d1 h6 10.♗h4 0-0 11.e3 ♘b4 12.♕b1 ♗f5 13.e4 ♗g4 14.d5 ♗xf3 15.gxf3 ♕d7 16.a3 ♘a6 17.♗g3 c6 18.d6 ♖fd8 19.♗e2 e5 20.f4 exf4 21.♗xf4 ♕e6 22.0-0 g5 23.♗g3 ♘c5 24.b4 ♘cd7 25.e5 ♗xe5 26.♘e4 ♖e8 27.♖fe1 ♗xg3 28.♘xg3 ♘d5 29.♗h5 ♘e5 30.♕f5 ♕xf5 31.♘xf5 ♖e6 32.♘d4 ♖ee8 33.♘f5 ♖ad8 34.♘xh6+ ♔g7 35.♖xe5 ♖xe5 36.♘xf7 ♖ee8 37.♘xd8 ♖xd8 38.♗g4 ♖xd6 39.♗c8 b5 40.♗b7 ♔f6 41.♗xc6 ♖xc6 42.♖xd5 ♖a6 43.♖d3 ♖a4 44.♔g2 a5 45.♖d6+ ♔f7 ½-½

Chuchelov,Vladimir
Khmelniker,Ilya
Warsaw Ech 2005 (3)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♕a4+ ♗d7 5.♕b3 dxc4 6.♕xc4 ♗g7 7.e4 0-0 8.e5 ♘g4 9.d4 ♗e6 10.♕b5 ♕c8 11.h3 ♘h6 12.♗c4 ♗xc4 13.♕xc4 c6 14.♗g5 ♕d7 15.♖d1 ♘a6 16.d5 ♖ae8 17.dxc6 ♕xc6 18.♕xc6 bxc6

19.♖d7 f6 20.♗xh6 ♗xh6 21.♖xa7 ♘c5 22.0-0 ♘d3 23.exf6 ♖xf6 24.b3 ♗g7 25.♘e4 ♖f4 26.♖d1 ♘b4 27.♘eg5 ♗f6 28.♖a4 ♘d5 29.♖xf4 ♘xf4 30.♘e4 ♗g7 31.g3 ♘d5 32.♘d4 ♘b4 33.a3 ♖d8 34.axb4 e5 35.♔f1 exd4 36.♘c5 ♖b8 37.♘d3 ♗f8 38.♘e5 ♖xb4 39.♘xc6 ♖xb3 40.♖xd4 ♖b2 41.♖d8 ♔g7 42.♖d7+ ♔g8 43.♘e5 ♗c5 44.♘g4 h5 45.♘f6+ ♔f8 46.♘e4 ♗e7 47.♔g2 ♖b3 48.♘d2 ♖c3 49.h4 ♖a3 50.♖b7 ♖d3 51.♘f3 ♗f6 52.♘g1 ♖d2 53.♖b6 ♔f7 54.♘h3 ♔g7 55.♘f4 ♔f7 56.♖a6 ♔g7 57.♔f3 ♔f7 58.♖c6 1-0

Tratar,Marko
Areschenko,Alexander
Istanbul Ech 2003 (12)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♕a4+ ♗d7 5.♕b3 dxc4 6.♕xc4 ♗g7 7.e4 0-0 8.e5 ♘g4 9.d4 ♗e6 10.d5 ♗f5 11.♗f4 ♘d7 12.♕e2 f6 13.e6 ♘de5 14.♗xe5 fxe5 15.♖d1 e4 16.♘g5 ♘e5 17.♕e3 ♘g4 18.♕e2 c6 19.h3 ♘e5 20.♘gxe4 ♗xe4 21.♕xe4 cxd5 22.♘xd5 ♕a5+ 23.b4 ♕xa2 24.♗e2 ♘c6 25.0-0 ♕b2 26.b5 ♘d4 27.♘xe7+ ♔h8 28.♗c4 ♖ae8 29.♘xg6+ hxg6 30.♕xg6 ♖e7 31.♗d3 ♗f6 32.♕h6+ ♔g8 33.♖de1 ♖d8 34.♖e3 ♗g7 35.♗h7+ ♔h8 36.♕h4 ♕b4 37.♖e4 ♕d6 38.♖fe1 ♖c8 39.♗g6+ ♔g8 40.♕h7+ ♔f8 41.♗f7 ♖ec7 42.♕g8+ ♔e7 43.♕xg7 ♖c4 44.♗h5+ 1-0

Lie,Kjetil
Guseinov,Kadir
ICC 2005 (1)

1.c4 g6 2.g3 ♗g7 3.♗g2 ♘f6 4.♘c3 0-0 5.d3 d6 6.♗g5 e5 7.♕d2 ♖e8 8.h4 h5 9.♘h3 c6 10.f4 ♕b6 11.fxe5 dxe5 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♖f1 ♗xh3 14.♗xh3 ♗g7 15.g4 hxg4 16.♗xg4 ♕d8 17.♖h1 f5 18.♗f3 ♘d7 19.h5 g5 20.h6 ♗f6 21.♗h5 ♖e7 22.♗g6 e4 23.dxe4 ♘e5 24.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 25.exf5 ♘xc4 26.♖d1 ♖f8 27.h7+ ♔h8 28.♖d3 ♘xb2 29.♖g3 ♘c4 30.♘d1 ♖d8 31.♘f2 ♘e3 32.♘d3 ♘d5 33.♔f2 ♘c3 34.♖e1 ♘e4+ 35.♔f3 ♘xg3 36.♔xg3 ♖xd3+ 0-1

Pachman,Ludek
Donner,Johannes
Rotterdam NED-CSR 1955 (2)

1.c4 g6 2.♘c3 ♗g7 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 0-0 5.e4 e5 6.♘ge2 d6 7.0-0 ♘fd7 8.d3 f5 9.exf5 gxf5 10.♗e3 ♘f6 11.♕d2 c6 12.h3 ♘h5 13.f4 ♕e8 14.♔h2 ♕g6 15.♕e1 ♘d7 16.♖d1 ♔h8 17.d4 ♖g8 18.♕f2 ♗f6 19.dxe5 dxe5 20.♖d6 exf4 21.♘xf4 ♘xf4 22.♗xf4 ♕f7 23.♖e1 ♗g7 24.♖de6 ♘f8 25.♖e7 ♕xc4 26.♖xg7 ♖xg7 27.♖e8 ♔g8 28.♗d6 ♖f7 29.♕e3 f4 30.♕e5 ♖f5 31.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 32.♕g5+ 1-0

Botvinnik,Mikhail
Scherbakov,Vitaly
Moscow ch-URS 1955 (3)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.♘ge2 e5 7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.d3 ♘c5 9.f4 c6 10.h3 ♘e6 11.f5 ♘d4 12.g4 ♘e8 13.♗e3 a6 14.♕d2 b5 15.♗g5 ♗f6 16.♗xf6 ♘xf6 17.♘xd4 exd4 18.♘e2 ♕b6 19.cxb5 axb5 20.♕h6 ♗d7 21.g5 ♘h5 22.♘f4 ♘g7 23.f6 1-0

Labuckas,Aidas
Fedorov,Alexey
Vilnius Mikenas-mem 1997 (1)

1.c4 g6 2.g3 ♗g7 3.♗g2 e5 4.♘c3 d6 5.e3 ♘f6 6.♘ge2 0-0 7.0-0 c6 8.d4 ♘a6 9.b3 ♖e8 10.♗a3 e4 11.b4 ♘c7 12.♕c2 ♗f5 13.h3 h5 14.♖ac1 ♘e6 15.♕d1 d5 16.b5 ♗h6 17.bxc6 bxc6 18.♔h2 ♔g7 19.♕a4 ♘g5 20.♕xc6 ♘f3+ 21.♔h1 ♘d2 22.♖fd1 ♘xc4 23.♘xd5 ♘xa3 24.♘c7 ♖b8 25.♘xe8+ ♘xe8 26.♕c5 ♖b2 27.♘c3 ♖xf2 28.♕xa3 ♗xe3 29.♖b1 ♕g5 30.♘d5 ♗d2 31.♖b8 ♗d7 32.♗xe4 ♗c6 33.♔g1 ♖e2 34.♖xe8 ♗xe8 35.♕f3 ♖e1+ 36.♖xe1 ♗xe1 37.g4 ♗d7 38.♕e2 ♗g3 39.♗f3 hxg4 40.hxg4 ♗xg4 41.♗xg4 ♕xd5 42.♗f3 ♕xd4+ 43.♔g2 ♗f4 44.♕c2 ♕d2+ 45.♕xd2 ♗xd2 46.♗d5 f5 47.♗e6 ♔f6 48.♗d7 a5 49.♔f3 g5 50.♔e2 ♗b4 51.♔f3 g4+ 52.♔g3 ♔g5 53.♗e6 f4+ 54.♔h2 f3 55.♔g3 ♗d6+ 56.♔f2 ♔f4 0-1

Aronin,Lev
Levenfish,Grigory
Moscow ch-URS 1949 (11)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e3 ♘f6 6.♘ge2 0-0 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 ♗e6 9.♘d5 ♖b8 10.♘ec3 ♘e7 11.♕a4 a6 12.♗d2 ♗f5 13.♕c2 c6 14.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 15.♘e4 ♗g7 16.♗b4 ♘c8 17.♕d2 ♖e8 18.♖fe1 ♗e6 19.b3 f5 20.♘c3 b5 21.♗xc6 bxc4 22.♘d5 ♘e7 23.♘xe7+ ♖xe7 24.dxc4 ♕b6 25.♗xd6 ♕xc6 26.♗xe7 ♔f7 27.♗d6 ♖d8 28.♖ad1 h5 29.e4 fxe4 30.c5 h4 31.♕b4 e3 32.♖xe3 h3 33.♕e4 ♕c8 34.♖f3+ ♔g8 35.♕xg6 1-0

Fridman,Daniel
Nataf,Igor-Alexandre
Istanbul Ech 2003 (10)

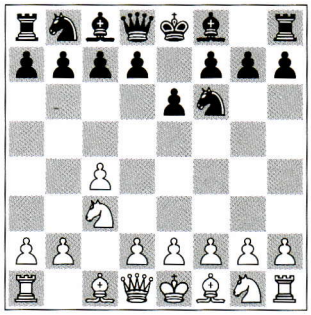
1.c4 g6 2.g3 ♗g7 3.♗g2 e5 4.♘c3 d6 5.e3 ♘c6 6.♘ge2 ♘f6 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 10.exd4 ♖b8 11.h3 a6 12.a4 ♖e8 13.♗g5 h6 14.♗e3 ♗f5 15.g4 ♗d7 16.♕d2 h5 17.f3 ♘h7 18.♖ad1 b5 19.axb5 axb5 20.cxb5 ♗xb5 21.♖f2 ♗c4 22.♗f1 ♗xf1 23.♖dxf1 ♕h4 24.♔g2 c5 25.♘e4 ♖b3 26.gxh5 ♕xh5 27.♖e2 ♖xe4 28.fxe4 ♘g5 29.♕c2 ♕xh3+ 30.♔f2 ♖xe3 0-1

Santacruz,Francisco
Granda Zuniga,Julio
Dubai ol 1986 (4)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.e3 e5 6.♘ge2 ♘c6 7.0-0 d6 8.d3 ♗e6 9.♘d5 ♕d7 10.♖b1 ♗h3 11.♘ec3 ♘xd5 12.♘xd5 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2 ♘d8 14.b4 ♘e6 15.♗d2 c6 16.♘c3 ♖ad8 17.b5 d5 18.bxc6 bxc6 19.cxd5 cxd5 20.♘e2 f5 21.♕b3 g5 22.f4 gxf4 23.gxf4 ♔h8 24.fxe5 d4 25.♕b7 ♕a4 26.♕b5 ♕xa2 27.♖b2 ♕a3 28.exd4 ♘xd4 29.♘xd4 ♖xd4 30.♖b3 ♕a2 31.♖f2 ♖g8 32.♔f3 a6 33.♗e3 ♕a1 34.♖b1 ♕a3 35.♕b3 ♖xd3 36.♕xa3 ♖xa3 37.♔e2 ♗xe5 38.♖xf5 ♖e8 39.♔f2 ♖a2+ 40.♔f3 ♗g7 41.♗f4 ♖c8 42.♗g3 a5 43.♖b7 a4 44.♖a5 a3 45.♖ba7 ♗b2 46.♗d6 ♖a1 47.♗b4 ♖f1+ 48.♔e2 ♖h1 49.♗xa3 ♖xh2+ 50.♔f3 ♗f6 51.♖a8 ♖xa8 52.♖xa8+ ♔g7 53.♗d6 ♖h3+ 54.♔g2 ♖d3 55.♗g3 h5 56.♖a5 ♔g6 57.♖a6 ♔f5 58.♖a5+ ♔g4 59.♖a4+ ♔f5 60.♖a5+ ♔g6 ½-½

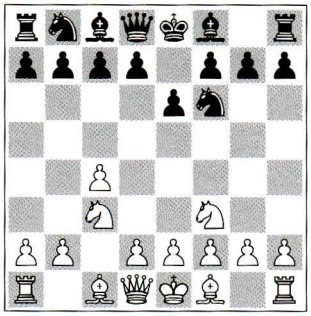
Defences with 2...e6

1. c2-c4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 e7-e6



Black proceeds as if he were playing a **Nimzo-Indian** – 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 – and a transposition is possible if White chooses 3.d4. However, an **English Opening** fan will usually prefer one of the following continuations.

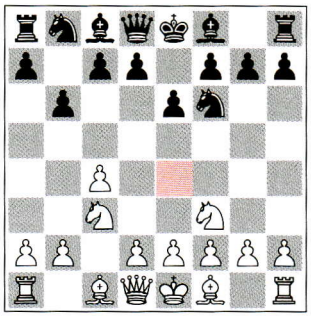
3. ♘g1-f3



This position is often reached via 1.♘f3. White chooses a quieter path and puts off d2-d4 in the hope of playing against an inferior version of the **Nimzo-Indian** or the **Queen's Indian**. Now Black can play 3...d5 (with the threat of 4...d4) and force White to play 4.d4, transposing to the normal **Queen's Gambit**. However, as we have already noted, a black player who wishes to adopt this classical defensive set-up generally prefers 1...e6 followed by 2...d5, so as to avoid the unpleasant **Flohr-Mikenas Gambit**.

Queen's Indian set-up 2

3. ... b7-b6

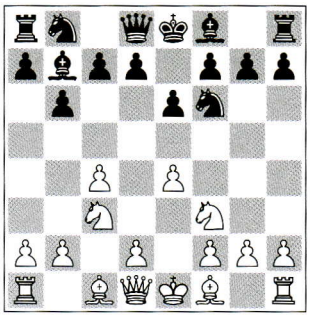


An ambitious idea: Black is not concerned by the fact that White can take hold of the centre with e2-e4, as he believes he will be able to effectively target the centre with his own countermeasures.

4. e2-e4

White takes up the gauntlet.
4.d4 transposes to the **Queen's Indian with 4.♘c3**, and 4.g3 has been discussed earlier.

4. ... ♗c8-b7



Black attacks the e4 pawn a second time.

Now White can choose from three ways of defending it, given that 5.e5 does not create problems for Black as it is met by 5...♘e4!.

A) 5. ♕d1-e2

An unnatural move that can be quite tricky for Black: the bishop will go to g2 and White is ready to play e4-e5 and d2-d4.

5. ... ♗f8-b4

Otherwise 5...c5 6.g3 (5.e5!?) 6...♘c6 7.♗g2 d6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.d3 0-0, with a balanced game.

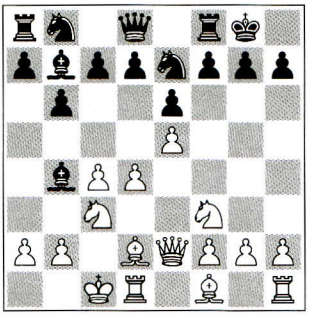
6. e4-e5 ♘f6-g8!

Not 6...♗xc3?! 7.bxc3 ♘e4 8.d3! and the c3 pawn cannot be captured.

7. d2-d4 ♘g8-e7

8. ♗c1-d2 0-0

9. 0-0-0!?



It is certainly somewhat unusual to castle queenside in the English, but when it is possible, the positions become highly complex both tactically and strategically.

White's space advantage is not so significant and thus, even more than elsewhere, the outcome of the game will simply depend on who plays best.

B) 5. d2-d3

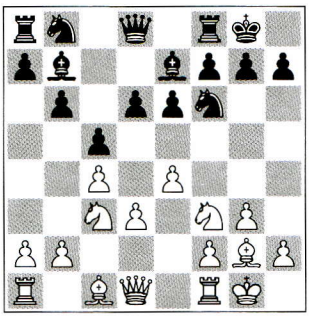
This seemingly solid and passive continuation should not be underestimated. White calmly completes development and when he has defended e4, he will eventually play d3-d4, creating complicated positions that could lead anywhere.

5. ... d7-d6

6. g2-g3 c7-c5

7. ♗f1-g2 ♗f8-e7

8. 0-0 0-0



9. b2-b3

There is also 9.♖e1, with the idea of d3-d4: after 9...a6 10.d4 cxd4 11.♘xd4 you reach a sort of **Hedgehog** in which White's loss of a tempo (d3-d4) is of little consequence, given the slow manoeuvring nature of these positions.

9. ... a7-a6

10. ♗c1-b2 ♘b8-d7

11. ♕d1-e2 ♕d8-c7

12. d3-d4

Preparing f2-f4 with 12.♘h4 is satisfactory for Black after 12...♘e5! 13.f4 ♘c6 14.♘f3 ♘d7 15.g4 ♗f6.

12. ... c5xd4

13. ♘f3xd4 ♖f8-e8

and once again we see a position that is typical of the **Hedgehog**, which will be

explored in greater depth in the section on the **Symmetrical English**.

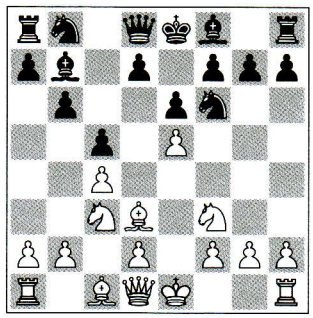
C) 5. ♗f1-d3

Another powerful though unnatural-looking move; it prepares e4-e5 more efficiently.

5. ... c7-c5

If Black stops e4-e5 with 5...d6, White will play 6.♗c2 and then 7.d4, and we have a version of the **Hedgehog** that can be reached with the **Kan Variation** of the **Sicilian** – 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6.

6. e4-e5!?



6.♗c2 or 6.0-0 will be followed by manoeuvring and a more or less equal game.

6. ... ♘f6-g4

After 6...♘g8, White's lead in development becomes noticeable.

7. 0-0

The sequence 7.h3 ♗xf3! 8.♕xf3 ♘xe5 9.♕xa8 ♘xd3+ leaves Black with optimum compensation for the exchange.

7. ... ♘b8-c6

8. ♗d3-e4! f7-f5

Following 8...♕c8 9.♖e1 d6 10.exd6 ♗xd6 11.d4, White has an initiative.

9. e5xf6 ♘g4xf6

10. ♗e4xc6 ♗b7xc6

11. d2-d4!

White must exploit his lead in development before Black can consolidate, after which the advantage of the bishop pair will be meaningful.

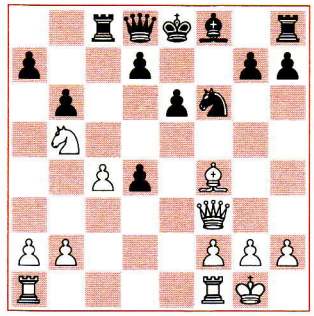
11. ... ♗c6xf3

After 11...cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♗b7 13.♕a4 the threat of 14.♘xe6 gives White an unpleasant edge

12. ♕d1xf3 c5xd4

13. ♘c3-b5 ♖a8-c8

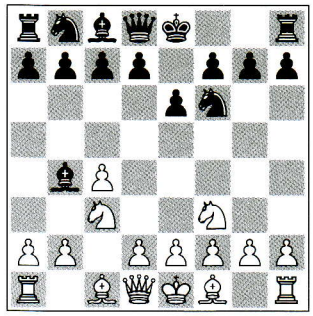
14. ♗c1-f4!?



It is not possible to assess accurately how much compensation White has after 14...♖xc4 15.♖ac1 ♖c5!.

Nimzo-Indian set-up

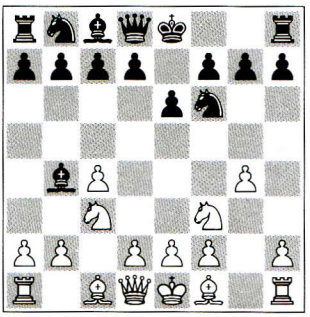
3. ... ♗f8-b4



As with the **Nimzo-Indian**, Black shows himself willing to concede the advantage of the two bishops in exchange for a better pawn structure. However, here White has more options because he still has a pawn on d2: one of the cardinal strategic objectives for Black in the Nimzo is control of the e4-square, but in this position it is not always possible.

Now White has four main continuations, ignoring 4.d4, which transposes to the **Kasparov Variation** of the **Nimzo-Indian**.

A) 4. g2-g4!?



An incredible move, at least from a classical point of view: first seen at the end of the 1990's, it was the idea of Russian grandmaster Zviagintsev – a true lover of the unorthodox and paradoxical (one only has to think of his 2005 brainchild, namely 2.♘a3!? in answer to the **Sicilian**).

However, the truly astonishing thing about this move is that not only it is playable, but after ten years of testing it also has the best performance! Conceptually it brings to mind Shabalov's move 7.g4!? in the **Anti-Meran** line, which came to light a few years before – see Vol. 2: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♕c2 ♗d6 7.g4!?.

It would appear that the g4 pawn can be snatched, but it is not wise to do so: 7...♘xg4 is met by 8.♖g1, and the g7 pawn leaves the board, with a plus for White. The g4-g5 advance is not intended to spearhead a kingside attack, but rather to chase off the f6 knight for better central control.

Even though White has scored well after 4...0-0 5.g5 ♘e8, it is difficult to believe that Black is objectively worse.

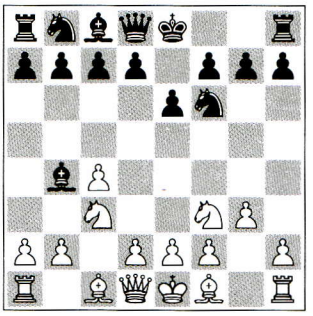
4. ... h7-h6

Black takes White seriously.

5. ♖h1-g1 b7-b6
6. ♕d1-c2 ♗c8-b7
7. a2-a3 ♗b4-e7
8. g4-g5 h6xg5
9. ♘f3xg5

The threat is 10.♘xf7 and then ♕g6+ and ♕g7+. At this point, after **9...♗f8** or **9...♘h5**, both of which defend g7, it is unclear if White's initiative is sufficiently good to compensate for the weak h-pawn.

B) 4. g2-g3



As has already been noted in the section on the **Catalan** in Volume 3, putting the knight on c3 is very often

ill-advised with a kingside fianchetto, in as much as after ...dxc4 White could have some problems winning back the pawn.

However, in this particular case, White has not yet advanced his pawn to d4, and thus he has a couple of extra options, such as recapturing on c3 with the d2 pawn after ...♗xc3.

4. ... 0-0

The immediate 4...d5 looks hasty because of 5.♕a4+ ♘c6 6.♘e5, with an edge for White. On the other hand, 4...b6 is perfectly playable: 5.♗g2 ♗b7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♕c2 c5 8.a3 ♗xc3 9.♕xc3 d5, and Black's fluid game makes it hard to exploit his advantage of the bishop pair.

5. ♗f1-g2 d7-d5

6. a2-a3

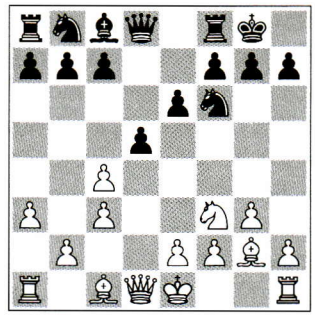
The alternative 6.♕b3 is interesting: 6...c5 7.a3 ♗a5 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.d3, with chances for both sides, whereas 6.d4 dxc4 7.0-0 transposes to the **Alekhine-Romanishin Variation** of the **Nimzo-Indian** – 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.g3 – , which gives Black satisfactory positions.

As you have no doubt appreciated by now, the **English Opening** is highly transpositional, which at first may be disconcerting for a student. However, it is important to remember that this reflects the holistic nature of opening theory, which is only subdivided into its component parts with the purpose to make classification and study easier.

6. ... ♗b4xc3

Or 6...♗e7 7.d4 dxc4 8.♘e5 ♘c6!, with balanced play.

7. d2xc3!



7. ... ♘b8-d7

If 7...dxc4 8.♕xd8 ♖xd8 9.♘e5, White wins back the pawn with a better game.

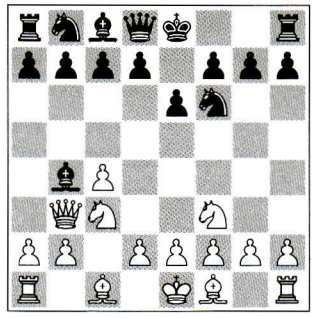
8. c4xd5 e6xd5

9. 0-0 ♖f8-e8

10. ♗c1-f4 c7-c6

The advantage of the bishop pair seems academic. However, it should be said that some players with a particularly solid style would enjoy playing this type of position as the possibility of losing is greatly reduced.

C) 4. ♕d1-b3



A logical move: White prevents his pawns from being doubled and at the same time threatens the b4 bishop. And unlike the same queen move in the **Nimzo-Indian** – 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕b3 – , White does not need to worry about a weak d4-square.

The only drawback is that the path of the b2 pawn is blocked.

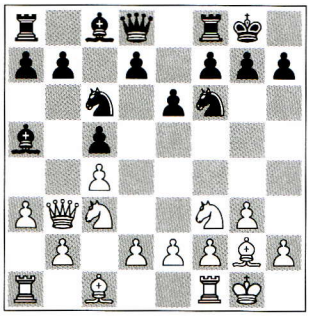
4. ... c7-c5

4...a5 is worth thinking about: 5.a3 ♗xc3 6.♕xc3 a4!?.

5. a2-a3 ♗b4-a5

The exchange 5...♗xc3 is too submissive: 6.♕xc3 0-0 7.b4, and White is doing better.

6. g2-g3 ♘b8-c6
7. ♗f1-g2 0-0
8. 0-0



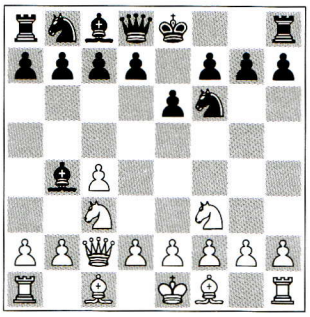
8. ... d7-d5

Black can also opt for a different central pawn structure by playing 8...d6 9.e3 e5 10.d3, and the position is even.

9. d2-d3 h7-h6
10. ♘c3-a4 b7-b6
11. ♗c1-f4 ♗c8-d7

with equal chances for both players.

D) 4. ♕d1-c2

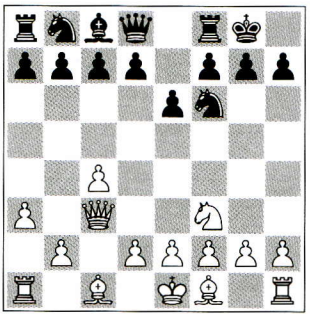


The most frequently played move, which avoids doubled c-pawns and controls e4.

4. ... 0-0

In **Nimzo-Indian** fashion, Black happily concedes the bishop. He can also hang on to it with 4...c5 5.a3 ♗a5, which is similar to Variation C, but with the unfavourable difference that the white queen is better placed on c2 than on b3.

5. a2-a3 ♗b4xc3
6. ♕c2xc3



The most important position for Black in this defensive system.

As in the parallel **Nimzo-Indian** – 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♕xc3 – Black calmly continues to develop without concern that he no longer has the two bishops, but here the move ♘f3 has been played instead of d2-d4.

As always, this has both its good and bad points: though it is true that the e4-square is rarely accessible to Black (White usually avoids d2-d4), it is also true that a knight already placed on f3 denies White the important option of playing his pawn to f3, which is very frequently seen in the abovementioned line.

6. ... b7-b6

It is also possible to adopt a different centre strategy with 6...d6 7.b4 e5 8.♗b2 ♘c6 9.e3 ♗g4, and both sides are in equipoise.

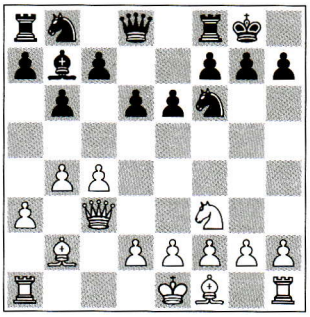
7. b2-b4

Often White plays 7.g3 and fianchettoes his king's bishop, but most of the time this just represents a change of move order. One line could be 7...♗b7 8.♗g2 d5!? 9.d4 (preventing ...d4) 9...dxc4 10.♕xc4 ♘bd7, which prepares ...c7-c5, with an acceptable position.

7.e3 also tends to transpose to the main line, unless Black responds with 7...♗b7 8.♗e2 d5!?, with a complex game.

7. ... ♗c8-b7

8. ♗c1-b2 d7-d6



9. g2-g3

It is not unusual to see the king's bishop go to the e2-square.

For example, 9.e3 ♘bd7 10.♗e2 c5 (10...e5!?) 11.0-0 ♕e7 12.d3 (or 12.d4), and now theory views the position to be equal. However, White's performance of around 60% would suggest that having the bishop pair is much more than a mere academic advantage.

9. ... ♘b8-d7

10. ♗f1-g2 c7-c5

11. 0-0 ♖a8-c8

12. d2-d3 d6-d5

12...♕e7 13.e4 ♖fd8 creates a fluid position that makes any result possible.

13. e2-e3

Some commentators award 13.b5 with an exclamation mark and see White as clearly better, but this seems to be overly optimistic.

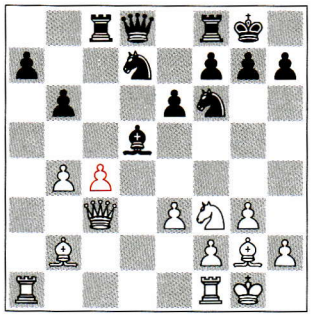
Such annotations are usually a sign of wisdom in hindsight: White is a strong player (Kortchnoi) and won; therefore the move is great and White stands better! The reality is that after 13...d4 Black's control of the centre nicely compensates for White's future queenside initiative (a4-a5).

13. ... d5xc4

14. d3xc4 c5xb4!?

When your adversary has the two bishops the accepted strategy is not to open up lines for them, but here Black has a specific idea in mind.

15. a3xb4 ♗b7-d5!



And now the point becomes clear: the c4 pawn comes under fire.

16. ♖a1xa7

After 16.♘d2 ♗xg2 17.♔xg2 ♕c7, a complicated game ensues that offers both sides chances.

16. ... ♖c8xc4

17. ♕c3-a3 ♕d8-b8

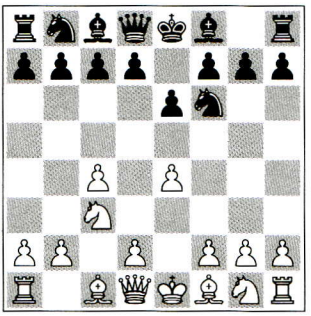
with a dynamic balance.

Flohr-Mikenas System

1. c2-c4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 e7-e6
3. e2-e4

This line was a favourite of Nimzowitsch, and more recently Kortchnoi and Kasparov. It has always been appreciated by ambitious players who like to have an initiative, though this involves taking more risks than would appeal to the average English Opening player.

Evidence of this is that in the main line, which we will look at soon, White is virtually forced to sacrifice a pawn if he wants to get anything concrete from the opening.



The centre pawn advance is very natural: why not grab the centre if Black lets you?

The benefit now is that White threatens e4-e5 and thus ...♗b4 is no longer on the cards. However, as is always the case with opening moves, for every plus there is a corresponding minus.

In this case, the pawn on e4 allows the immediate freeing advance ...d7-d5 (to what extent it actually frees Black's game is central to the next line). Otherwise, if Black opts to push his c-pawn to c5, the d4-square becomes weak.

Now Black has two paths he can follow, ignoring the timid 3...d6, which would be followed by 4.d4 with a clear advantage for White; and 3...e5, which looks too slow:

A) 3. ... d7-d5
4. e4-e5

4.cxd5 exd5 5.e5 ♘e4 gives Black fewer problems.

4. ... d5-d4

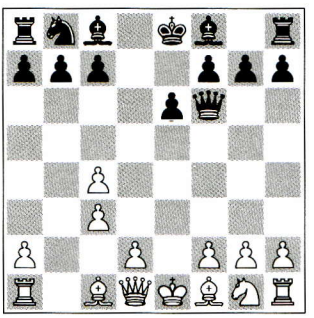
The move 4...♘e4!? is interesting. White is probably best off ignoring it and playing 5.♘f3, given that going on a pawn hunt with 5.♘xe4 dxe4 6.♕g4 looks risky after 6...♘a6!? 7.♕xe4 ♗d7. However, the fact that the material-conscious chess engines see Black as better is clear evidence that his counterplay is effective.

Less convincing is 4...♘fd7 5.cxd5 exd5 6.d4 c5 7.♘f3, with a small plus for White.

5. e5xf6 d4xc3
6. b2xc3

Capturing on g7 serves only to assist Black's development.

6. ... ♕d8xf6



7. d2-d4

Recently the refinement 7.♘f3!? has been seen more often; White holds back on d2-d4 and continues with ♗d3 and 0-0.

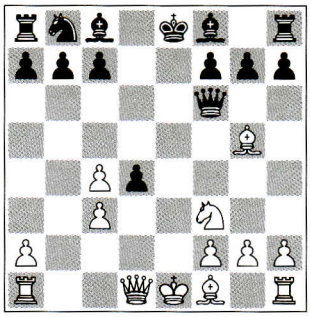
This has proved itself to be particularly effective if Black replies with 7...c5, but usually he will prefer 7...e5 and after 8.d4, we are back in the main line by means of a different move order... unless White decides to continue with 8.♗d3 ♘a6!? 9.0-0 ♗d6 10.♗c2 ♗g4 11.d4, and the position is far from clear.

7. ... e6-e5

The most frequent choice. The alternatives 7...c5 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.♗g5 ♕f5 10.cxd4 ♗b4+ 11.♗d2 and 7...b6 8.♘f3 ♗b7 9.♗d3 h6 are certainly playable, but White will have a freer game.

8. ♘g1-f3 e5xd4

9. ♗c1-g5!



Avoiding the simplification that follows after 9.cxd4 ♗b4+ 10.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 11.♕xd2 0-0, which leaves Black with nothing to worry about.

9. ... ♕f6-e6+

10. ♗f1-e2

This is an illusory pawn sacrifice. Black cannot capture on c3, as checkmate will be delivered on d8.

10. ... ♗f8-e7

After 10...f6 11.♘xd4 ♕f7 12.♗f4, White's piece activity compensates for his weakened pawn structure.

11. c3xd4

11.♗xe7 is well met by 11...d3!.

11. ... ♗e7xg5

12. ♘f3xg5 ♕e6-e7

The reply 12...♕g6!? may be an improvement.

13. ♕d1-d2 0-0

14. 0-0

White has an edge in as much as the pushed d-pawn could become a threat at some time in the future.

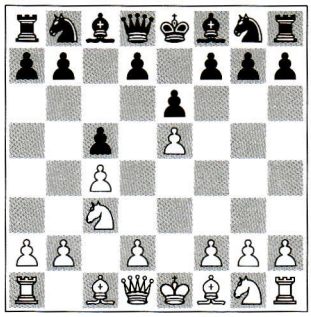
B) 3. ... c7-c5

It is logical to exert control over the weakened d4-square.

4. e4-e5

4.♘f3 transposes to the **Symmetrical English**.

4. ... ♘f6-g8



In the spirit of the **Alekhine Defence** (1.e4 ♘f6), Black concedes space in the hope that the e5 pawn will become a target of attack, with the advantage that this pawn cannot be supported by d4 and that doing so with an f2-f4 advance looks strategically doubtful.

If White wishes to avoid an inferior position, he must play dynamically and exploit his lead in development.

5. ♘g1-f3

5.d4 avoids the sacrifice of the e5 pawn. However, experience has demonstrated that Black has nothing to fear following 5...cxd4 6.♕xd4 ♘c6 7.♕e4 d6 (also 7...f5 is good) 8.♘f3 dxe5 9.♘xe5 ♗d7 10.♘xd7 ♕xd7.

5. ... ♘b8-c6

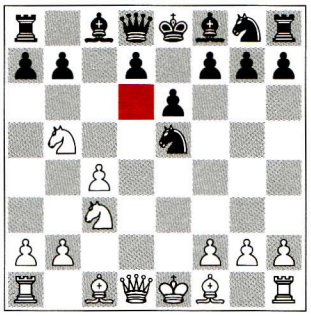
6. d2-d4

White must respond energetically; otherwise, after ...♘ge7-g6 the e5 pawn is going to have serious problems surviving.

6. ... c5xd4

7. ♘f3xd4 ♘c6xe5

8. ♘d4-b5



White's idea is to give check with the knight on d6, resulting in weak dark squares for Black, which represents good compensation for the lost pawn. Whether the compensation is sufficient or not is hard to say. However, both players have played strategically acceptable moves, and thus chess logic would tell us that with correct play White's static advantage and Black's dynamic one should balance each other out.

8. ... a7-a6

Accentuating the problem of his weak dark squares. However, Black must control the b5-square: the threat is 9.♘d6+ ♗xd6 10.♕xd6 (gaining a tempo by attacking the e5 knight) followed by ♘b5.

A possible alternative is to immediately play 8...f6, which usually ends up being a simple change in move order. In the 1970's *the weakness of 8...d6?! was made evident by the reply 9.c5!.*

9. ♘b5-d6+ ♗f8xd6

10. ♕d1xd6 f7-f6

It is best to keep the knight in the centre and not move it to g6, as much as anything so as to keep open the option of ...♘f7.

11. ♗c1-e3

The weakness on b6 starts to become apparent.

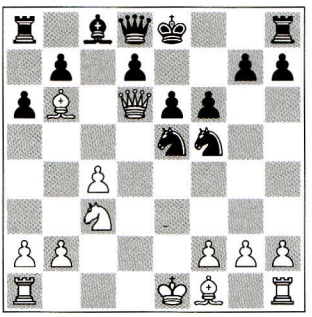
11. ... ♘g8-e7

After 11...♘f7 there is 12.♕g3, which attacks g7, with an advantage for White.

12. ♗e3-b6

But doesn't White pick up the queen? No! With the tactical resource...

12. ... ♘e7-f5



Black holds his own.

13. ♕d6-c5

Even a pawn down, White can exchange queens with 13.♗xd8 ♘xd6

14.♗c7 ♔e7 15.c5 ♘e8 16.♗b6 d5 17.cxd6+ ♘xd6 18.0-0-0, with good compensation. However, it is more in the spirit of the variation to keep the queens on the board.

13. ... d7-d6

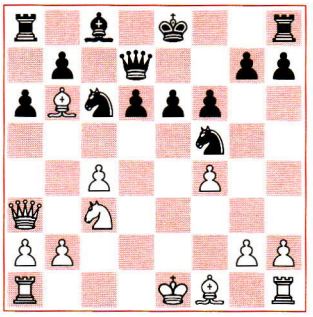
Following 13...♕e7, the queen exchange with 14.♕xe7+! is more promising than in the line in the note above. This is because it is more difficult for Black to execute the freeing advance ...d7-d5.

14. ♕c5-a5 ♕d8-d7

14...♕e7 does not change much.

15. f2-f4 ♘e5-c6

16. ♕a5-a3



White prepares queenside castling and he will push his g-pawn in anticipation of Black's probable kingside castling.

This is an insidious initiative, even if one cannot say that White is objectively better. Nonetheless, an aggressive and creative player will feel particularly comfortable playing this type of position.

8.0-0 c5 9.h3 ♘c6 10.d4 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♖c8 12.♘xc6 ♗xc6 13.♗f4 ♕c7 14.♕e2 a6 15.♖ac1 ♖fd8 16.♖fd1 ♕a7 17.a4 e5 18.♗g5 a5 19.♘b5 ♕b8 20.h4 h6 21.♗xf6 ♗xf6 22.♘c3 ♗e7 23.♗h3 ♖c7 24.♖d3 ♗b7 25.b3 ♗c6 26.♖cd1 ♗f8 27.♕e3 ♕b7 28.♔h2 ♔h8 29.h5 ♔g8 30.♗f5 ♕b8 31.♕f3 ♖e7 32.♕g4 ♕c7 33.♖f3 ♖ee8 34.♖c1 ♖e7 35.♘d5 ♗xd5 36.exd5 e4 37.♗xe4 ♖e5 38.♗d3 ♖de8 39.♔g2 ♕e7 40.♖f5 ♖e1 41.♖xe1 ♕xe1 42.♖f3 ♕e7 43.♕f5 g6 44.hxg6 f6 45.♕xf6 ♗g7 46.♕f7+ ♔h8 47.♕xe7 ♖xe7 48.♖f4 ♔g8 49.♖h4 ♖e5 50.♔f3 h5 51.♖f4 ♖e8 52.♗f5 ♗f6 53.♗d7 ♖f8 54.♖f5 h4 55.gxh4 ♗xh4 56.♗e6+ ♔g7 57.♗f7 ♖h8 58.♔g4 ♗f6 59.♖f3 ♖h1 60.♔f5 ♖e1 61.♖e3 ♖f1 62.♔e6 ♗d4 63.♔xd6 1-0

Romanishin,Oleg
Petrosian,Tigran
Erevan ch-URS 1975 (8)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.e4 ♗b7 5.♗d3 d6 6.♗c2 c5 7.d4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.b3 ♘c6 11.♗b2 a6 12.♔h1 ♕c7 13.f4 ♖ad8 14.♖c1 ♕b8 15.♖f3 g6 16.♘d5 exd5 17.exd5 ♘xd4 18.♕xd4 ♖de8 19.f5 ♗d8 20.♕h4 ♖e5 21.♕h6 ♕c7 22.♖g3 ♗c8 23.♗xe5 dxe5 24.fxg6 fxg6 25.♗xg6 ♘g4 26.♗h5 ♖f6 27.♕d2 ♖f4 28.d6 ♕g7 29.d7 ♗b7 30.♕xf4 1-0

Smyslov,Vasily
Reshevsky,Samuel
Belgrade World-URS 1970 (2)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.e4 ♗b7 5.d3 d6 6.g3 ♗e7 7.♗g2 0-0

Kortchnoi,Viktor
Polugaevsky,Lev
Buenos Aires match 1980 (3)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.e4 ♗b7 5.♗d3 c5 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.e5 ♘g4

8.♗e4 ♕c8 9.♖e1 d6 10.exd6 ♗xd6 11.d4 cxd4 12.♘b5 ♗c5 13.♘fxd4 h5 14.h3 ♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♗xe4 16.♖xe4 ♘f6 17.♖e1 0-0 18.♘c2 ♖d8 19.♕e2 ♕d7 20.♗f4 ♕d3 21.♕xd3 ♖xd3 22.♖ad1 ♖xd1 23.♖xd1 ♖c8 24.♔f1 ♔f8 25.♗e5 ♔e8 26.b3 ♗e7 27.♘d4 a6 28.♘f3 g6 29.♗d4 ♘d7 30.♘e5 ♘xe5 ½-½

Carlsen,Magnus
Adams,Michael

Turin ol 2006 (7)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.g3 0-0 5.♗g2 d5 6.d4 dxc4 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♖b8 10.♗g5 b5 11.e4 h6 12.♗h4 e5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♕xd1 15.♖fxd1 ♘d7 16.f4 ♖e8 17.e6 fxe6 18.e5 ♘xe5 19.♗d8 ♘d3 20.♗xc7 ♖b7 21.♗xb7 ♗xb7 22.a4 bxa4 23.♖db1 ♗c6 24.♖b8 ♔f7 25.♖xe8 ♔xe8 26.♗d6 a6 27.♖b1 h5 28.♖b6 ♔d7 29.♗f8 g6 30.♖xa6 e5 31.fxe5 ♘xe5 32.h4 ♘g4 33.♗g7 ♔c7 34.♗d4 ♘h6 35.♔f2 ♘f5 36.♗c5 ♔d7 37.♗b4 ♔c7 38.♖a7+ ♔b6 39.♖f7 ♘h6 40.♖e7 ♗d5 41.♖d7 ♘g4+ 42.♔e2 ♗e4 43.♖d4 ♗d3+ 44.♔f3 ♘h2+ 45.♔f4 ♘f1 46.♖d6+ ♔b5 47.♖d5+ ♔b6 48.♖a5 ♗c2 49.♖e5 ♗d3 50.♔f3 ♘d2+ 51.♔f4 ♘f1 52.g4 hxg4 53.♔xg4 ♘d2 54.♔f4 ♘b3 55.♖e6+ ♔b5 56.♖e8 ♘c1 57.♖b8+ ♔c6 58.♖a8 ♘e2+ 59.♔f3 ♘g1+ 60.♔e3 ♘e2 61.♖xa4 ♔d5 62.♖a5+ ♔e6 63.♖a2 ♘g3 64.♔f4 ♘f5 65.♖a6+ ♔f7 66.♔g5 ♘g3 67.♖a7+ ♔g8 68.♔f6 ♘h5+ 69.♔e5 ♘g3 70.♗c5 ♘f5 71.♗f2 ♘h6 72.♗d4 ♘f5 73.♔f6 1-0

Gurevich,Mikhail
Naiditsch,Arkady

Antalya Ech 2004 (11)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.g4 h6 5.♖g1 b6 6.♕c2 ♗b7 7.a3 ♗e7 8.g5 hxg5 9.♘xg5 ♘h5 10.d4 ♘c6 11.♘f3 ♗f6 12.d5 ♘e5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.♗g5 f6 15.♗g2 c6 16.dxe6 dxe6 17.♗e3 f5 18.c5 ♘f6 19.♗f3 ♔f7 20.♕b3 ♘d5 21.♘xd5 cxd5 22.cxb6 axb6 23.0-0-0 ♗a6 24.♗d4 ♗xd4 25.♖xd4 ♖xh2 26.♗xd5 ♖c8+ 27.♔b1 ♔f8 28.♕b4+ ♕e7 29.♕xb6 exd5 30.♕xa6 ♖e8 31.♖f4 ♕e5 32.♕g6 ♔g8 33.♖xf5 ♕e4+ 34.♔a1 ♖e7 35.♕d6 ♖h1 36.♖xh1 ♕xh1+ 37.♔a2 ♖xe2 38.♕f8+ ♔h7 39.♕f7 1-0

Pelletier,Yannick
Mchedlishvili,Mikheil

Istanbul Ech 2003 (6)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕b3 c5 5.g3 0-0 6.♗g2 ♘c6 7.d3 d5 8.0-0 h6 9.♗f4 b6 10.a3 ♗a5 11.♘a2 ♘h5 12.♘e5 ♘xf4 13.♘xc6 ♘xe2+ 14.♔h1 ♕c7 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♕xd5 ♗b7 17.b4 ♖ae8 18.♖ae1 ♗a8 19.bxa5 ♖e6 20.♕c4 ♗xc6 21.♘c3 ♗xg2+ 22.♔xg2 ♕c6+ 23.f3 ♘xc3 24.♕xc3 ♖d8 25.♖xe6 ♕xe6 26.♖e1 ♕a2+ 27.♔g1 ♕d5 28.axb6 axb6 29.♖e3 ♕a2 30.g4 ♖d4 31.♖e8+ ♔h7 32.♖e7 ♕b1+ 33.♔g2 ♖xd3 34.♕c4 ♖d2+ 35.♔h3 ♕d3 36.♕xd3+ ♖xd3 37.♔g3 ♖xa3 38.♖xf7 b5 39.h4 b4 40.♖b7 b3 41.g5 hxg5 42.hxg5 c4 43.♔g4 ♖a1 44.f4 ♔g8 45.g6 ♖a8 46.f5 ♖c8 47.♔g5 c3 48.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 49.f6+ ♔g8 50.♔h6 ♖c7 0-1

Larsen,Bent
Gheorghiu,Florin
Winnipeg 1967 (9)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.♘f3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 c5 5.a3 ♗a5 6.e3 ♘c6 7.d4 d6 8.♗d3 e5 9.dxe5 ♘xe5 10.♘xe5 dxe5 11.0-0 ♗xc3 12.♕xc3 0-0 13.b3 ♖e8 14.♗b2 b6 15.♖ad1 ♕e7 16.♗c2 ♗b7 17.f3 e4 18.f4 ♖ad8 19.h3 ♖xd1 20.♖xd1 ♖d8 21.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 22.♕e5 ♔f8 23.♗c3 ♘e8 24.b4 ♕d6 25.bxc5 bxc5 26.♗a4 ♕xe5 27.♗xe5 ♔e7 28.♗b8 ♘f6 29.♗xa7 ♘d7 30.♗b5 ♔d6 31.a4 ♗c6 32.a5 ♔c7 33.a6 h5 34.g4 h4 35.♔f2 f6 36.f5 ♘b6 37.♗xb6+ ♔xb6 38.♔e2 ♗a8 39.♔d2 ♔a5 40.♔c3 ♔b6 41.♔b3 ♔a5 42.♔a3 ♔b6 43.♔a4 1-0

Sakaev,Konstantin
Azarov,Sergey
Moscow Aeroflot 2006 (5)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 b6 5.a3 ♗xc3 6.♕xc3 ♗b7 7.g3 0-0 8.♗g2 c5 9.0-0 ♘c6 10.b4 d6 11.d3 e5 12.e3 ♖e8 13.♗b2 ♖c8 14.b5 ♘a5 15.e4 ♘d7 16.♗h3 ♖c7 17.♗xd7 ♖xd7 18.♘h4 f6 19.♘f5 ♗a8 20.♘e3 ♘b7 21.f4 ♕b8 22.f5 a5 23.♖f2 ♘d8 24.♕c2 ♔f7 25.g4 ♔e7 26.h4 h6 27.♖af1 ♘f7 28.♗c1 ♖h8 29.♘d1 ♖dd8 30.♘c3 ♖h7 31.♖f3 ♖dh8 32.♔f2 ♕d8 33.♔e1 ♗b7 34.♕g2 ♔d7 35.♖g3 ♔c7 36.♗d2 ♔b8 37.♕f3 ♔a7 38.♖fg1 ♕f8 39.♔d1 ♕e7 40.♔c2 ♕f8 41.♔b3 ♕e7 42.♗e3 ♕f8 43.g5 hxg5 44.hxg5 ♖h2 45.g6 ♘d8 46.♖3g2 ♖2h3 47.♖g3 ♖h2 48.♗f2 ♖8h5 49.♖3g2 ♖xg2 50.♖xg2 ♕h8 51.♗g1 ♖h1 52.♕e2 ♕h6 53.♖h2 ♖xh2 54.♗xh2 ♕c1 55.♗g3 a4+ 56.♘xa4 ♗c8 57.♕e1 ♕g5 58.♗h4 ♕h6 59.♘c3 ♘b7 60.♔c2 ♘a5 61.♕g3 ♕h8 62.♗xf6 1-0

Bareev,Evgeny
Karpov,Anatoly
Dortmund 1995 (1)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3 6.♕xc3 b6 7.g3 ♗b7 8.♗g2 c5 9.b4 d6 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♗b2 ♕c7 12.d3 ♖fc8 13.♖ac1 a6 14.♕d2 ♗c6 15.♖fe1 ♕b7 16.d4 ♕b8 17.♗h3 ♘e4 18.♕e3 d5 19.cxd5 ♗xd5 20.dxc5 bxc5 21.♘d2 ♘d6 22.♕c3 ♘e8 23.e4 ♗b7 24.♘b3 ♘df6 25.♗g2 cxb4 26.♕xb4 ♖xc1 27.♗xc1 ♗c6 28.♕c3 ♕c8 29.♗f4 ♗b5 30.♕b2 ♕d8 31.♘c5 ♖c8 32.♕b4 ♕b6 33.♖c1 ♕a7 34.h3 h6 35.♖c3 ♕a8 36.a4 ♗c6 37.♕b6 ♘d7 38.♘xd7 ♗xd7 39.♖xc8 ♕xc8 40.a5 ♗b5 41.♗f1 ♗xf1 42.♔xf1 ♕c4+ 43.♔g1 ♘f6 44.f3 ♘h5 45.♗b8 ♕c3 46.g4 ♘f6 47.♕d8+ ♔h7 48.♔g2 ♕b2+ 49.♔g1 ♕e2 0-1

Van Wely,Loek
Adams,Michael
Wijk aan Zee 2000 (5)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3 6.♕xc3 b6 7.b4 a5 8.♗b2 d6 9.g3 axb4 10.axb4 ♖xa1+ 11.♗xa1 c5 12.♗g2 e5 13.0-0 ♘c6 14.b5 ♘d4 15.♘xd4 cxd4 16.♕b4 ♕c7 17.e3 ♕c5 18.♕xc5 dxc5 19.f4 dxe3 20.fxe5 exd2 21.h3 ♖d8 22.♖d1 ♘g4

23.♗c3 ♘e3 24.♖xd2 ♖xd2 25.♗xd2 ♘xg2 26.♔xg2 ♔f8 27.e6 ♗xe6 28.♗f4 ♗xc4 29.♗c7 ♔e7 30.♔f3 ♗xb5 31.♗xb6 ♔d6 32.h4 ♔d5 33.♔e3 ♗d7 34.♗d8 ♔d6 35.♗a5 h6 36.♔f4 f6 37.♗d8 ♔e6 38.♔e4 ♗c6+ 39.♔d3 ♗b5+ 40.♔e4 ♗d7 41.♔d3 ♔d6 42.♔e4 ♗g4 43.♔f4 ♗d1 44.♔e3 ♗c2 45.♔d2 ♗b1 46.♔e3 ♔e6 47.♗b6 c4 48.♗d4 ♔f5 49.♗c3 ♗c2 50.♔f3 ♗d1+ 51.♔e3 g5 52.♗b2 ♗h5 53.♗c3 ♗f7 54.♔f3 ♗d5+ 55.♔f2 ♗c6 56.♔e3 ♗a4 57.♔f3 ♗d1+ 58.♔e3 ♔g6 59.♔d4 ♗e2 60.♗b4 ♔h5 61.♗f8 f5 62.♔e5 ♗d3 63.hxg5 hxg5 64.♗a3 ♔g4 65.♗c1 ♗e2 66.♗d2 ♗d1 67.♔d4 ♗b3 68.♔e5 ♗a2 69.♗c1 c3 70.♔d4 c2 71.♔e5 ♗b3 72.♗d2 ♗a4 73.♗c1 ♗d7 74.♗d2 ♔xg3 75.♗xg5 ♔f3 76.♗c1 ♔e2 0-1

Ivanchuk,Vasily
Nielsen,Peter Heine
Skanderborg 2003 (5)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.e4 d5 4.e5 d4 5.exf6 dxc3 6.bxc3 ♕xf6 7.♘f3 e5 8.d4 exd4 9.♗g5 ♕e6+ 10.♗e2 ♗e7 11.cxd4 ♗xg5 12.♘xg5 ♕e7 13.♕d2 ♘c6 14.d5 ♘e5 15.0-0 0-0 16.♖fe1 ♗f5 17.♕f4 ♕f6 18.♘f3 ♖fe8 19.♘h4 ♘g6 20.♕xf5 ♕xh4 21.♗f1 ♕d4 22.♕d7 ♖xe1 23.♖xe1 ♕c5 24.h4 ♔f8 25.♕f5 ♔g8 26.h5 ♘f8 27.♕g5 ♕d6 28.g3 h6 29.♕e7 ♘d7 30.♗h3 ♘c5 31.♗f5 ♖b8 32.♕e8+ ♕f8 33.♕e7 ♕xe7 34.♖xe7 ♔f8 35.♖xc7 ♘a6 36.d6 ♖d8 37.c5 b6 38.c6 ♘b8 39.♗e4 ♖xd6 40.♖c8+ 1-0

Ni Hua
Alexandrov,Alexey
Calcutta open 2004 (9)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.e4 d5 4.e5 d4 5.exf6 dxc3 6.bxc3 ♕xf6 7.d4 e5 8.♘f3 exd4 9.♗g5 ♕e6+ 10.♗e2 f6 11.♘xd4 ♕f7 12.♗h6 c5 13.♘b5 ♗f5 14.0-0 ♕d7 15.♗f4 ♘a6 16.♖e1 ♔f7 17.♗f3 ♖d8 18.♗xb7 g5 19.♗g3 ♘b8 20.♕h5+ ♔g7 21.♖ad1 ♕xb7 22.♖xd8 ♘c6 23.♖d5 ♗g6 24.♕g4 h5 25.♖d7+ ♔h6 26.♕e6 ♕a8 27.♕xf6 ♗e7 1-0

Kasparov,Garry
Beliavsky,Alexander
Linares 1991 (9)

1.c4 e6 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.e4 c5 4.e5 ♘g8 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘xe5 8.♘db5 a6 9.♘d6+ ♗xd6 10.♕xd6 f6 11.♗e3 ♘e7 12.♗b6 ♘f5 13.♕c5 d6 14.♕a5 ♕d7 15.f4 ♘c6 16.♕a3 e5 17.♗d3 0-0 18.0-0 exf4 19.♖xf4 ♘fe7 20.♖d1 ♘g6 21.♖ff1 ♘ge5 22.♗e4 ♕f7 23.b3 ♗e6 24.♕xd6 ♔h8 25.♕c7 ♕xc7 26.♗xc7 ♖f7 27.♗b6 ♖e8 28.h3 ♖d7 29.♘d5 ♖c8 30.g4 ♘g6 31.♔h2 ♘ce5 32.a4 ♖d6 33.a5 ♘d7 34.♘c7 1-0

Kasparov,Garry
Sokolov,Andrey
Belfort 1988 (15)

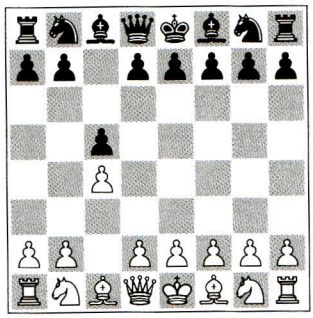
1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.e4 c5 4.e5 ♘g8 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♘xe5 8.♘db5 a6 9.♘d6+ ♗xd6 10.♕xd6 f6 11.♗e3 ♘e7 12.♗b6 ♘f5 13.♕c5 d6 14.♕a5 ♕e7 15.0-0-0 0-0 16.f4 ♘c6 17.♕a3 e5 18.g4 ♘fd4 19.♘d5 ♕f7 20.f5 g6 21.♖g1 gxf5 22.g5 ♔h8 23.gxf6

♗e6 24.♕xd6 ♗xd5 25.cxd5 ♕xf6 26.♕xf6+ ♖xf6 27.♔b1 ♘d8 28.♗c5 ♖c8 29.♗e7 ♖f7 30.♗d6 ♘f3 31.♖g3 e4 32.♗e2 ♖f6 33.♗f4 ♖g6 34.♗xf3 ♖xg3 35.♗xe4 fxe4 36.hxg3 ♔g7 37.♖d4 ♘f7 38.♖xe4 ♖d8 39.♖e7 ♖xd5 40.♖xb7 h5 41.♖a7 a5 42.a4 1-0

Kortchnoi,Viktor
Petrosian,Tigran
Odessa match 1974 (3)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.e4 ♗b7 5.♕e2 c5 6.e5 ♘g8 7.d4 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 ♘c6 9.d5 ♘xe5 10.♕g3 d6 11.♗f4 ♘g6 12.dxe6 fxe6 13.0-0-0 ♘xf4 14.♕xf4 g6 15.♕e4 ♘f6 16.♕xe6+ ♕e7 17.♖xd6 ♕xe6 18.♖xe6+ ♔f7 19.♖c6 ♖c8 20.♖xc8 ♗h6+ 21.♔c2 ♖xc8 22.♗e2 ♖d8 23.♔b3 ♖d2 24.♖d1 ♘e8 25.♖xd2 ♗xd2 26.♘b5 a6 27.♘c3 ♗xc3 28.♔xc3 a5 29.♗d3 ♘f6 30.f4 ♘h5 31.g3 ♘f6 32.♔d2 ♘e8 33.g4 ♘d6 34.♔e3 ♔e6 35.h4 ♔f7 36.b3 ♔g7 37.g5 ♔f7 38.f5 gxf5 39.♔f4 ♔g6 40.a4 ♘e4 41.♗xe4 fxe4 42.♔xe4 ♔h5 43.♔f5 ♔xh4 44.g6 hxg6+ 45.♔xg6 ♔g4 46.♔f6 ♔f4 47.♔e6 ♔e4 48.♔d6 ♔d4 49.♔c6 ♔c3 50.♔xb6 ♔xb3 51.♔b5 1-0

Symmetrical English
1.c2-c4 c7-c5



Many believe the **Symmetrical English** to be a reliable but on the whole boring approach which offers few winning prospects to Black.

This view is the result of prejudicial thinking: symmetry in the opening does not necessarily mean a lifeless position; in the case in question, there are lines where identical opposing positions are maintained for many moves, but more often than not the symmetry is broken quickly, producing strategically complex positions. Let us not forget that the symmetry that marks the initial position of every game of chess produces the countless possibilities that make the game so fascinating!

As with the **Sicilian**, Black advances his c-pawn in order to exert control over the important d4-square. Indeed, when White pushes his pawn to d4 and takes with the f3 knight we frequently see true transpositions to the Sicilian, usually the **Accelerated Dragon** or the **Kan Variation**.

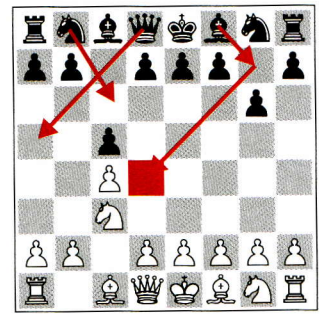
However, needless to say, White can choose not to play d2-d4 or otherwise delay it, and instead establish a kingside fianchetto with the bishop on g2 so as to take possession of the long light-squared diagonal. More rarely, we see the pawn go to e3 with a d4 advance to follow. This can become quite nasty for Black in the lines where the knight is developed prematurely to c6.

Now we will discuss three alternatives. However, we should note again the highly transpositional nature of the **English Opening**, which sometimes makes classification problematical. In the **Symmetrical English**, the kingside fianchetto and the two knight moves can be played in various orders.

A) 2. ♘b1-c3

Some books give this as the main line. As Fischer observed, White's lack of control of the d4-square encourages Black to energetically play for this square himself:

2. ... g7-g6!



The advantage for Black is that White does not have time to establish the **Maroczy Bind formation** (see **Accelerated Dragon**, Vol. 1) but, naturally, he has plenty of other options.

Another popular alternative is 2...♘f6 3.g3 d5 along the lines of the **Rubinstein Variation**, which we will examine next. The fact that White has not yet played ♘f3 grants him other options: 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗g2 ♘c7 6.♕b3!? (instead of 6.♘f3, with a transposition) 6...♘c6 7.♗xc6+!? bxc6 8.♘f3 f6 9.♕a4, and White has a promising position.

3. ♘g1-f3 ♗f8-g7!

3...♘c6 4.e3! ♗g7 5.d4 has scored nicely for White

4. d2-d4

The alternative 4.g3 leads into lines that are probably better; we will look at these later.

4. ... c5xd4

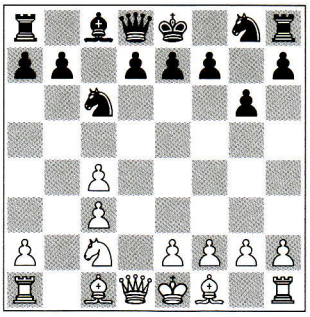
5. ♘f3xd4 ♘b8-c6!

The d4 knight is hanging and White does not have time to play e2-e4.

6. ♘d4-c2 ♗g7xc3+!?

This capture is not forced, but it is certainly the most ambitious continuation.

7. b2xc3



In this particular case, the compromised pawn structure seems to be a more significant factor than the possession of the bishop pair, which is confirmed by Black's good results.

7. ... ♕d8-a5

8. ♗c1-d2 ♘g8-f6

9. f2-f3 d7-d6

10. e2-e4 ♗c8-e6

11. ♘c2-e3 0-0

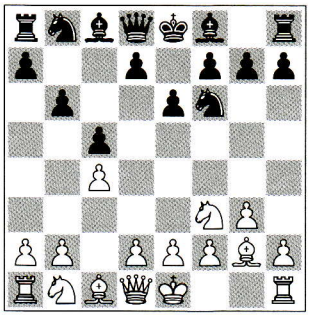
12. ♗f1-e2 ♘f6-d7

and Black has an edge.

B) 2. g2-g3

This move sequence has the benefit of preventing the **Hedgehog**, which we will examine later. The ...b7-b6 pawn advance that characterizes this defensive formation is possible after ♘f3, but here it cannot be played.

For example, after 2...♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♘f3 *Black cannot play 4...b6?!*



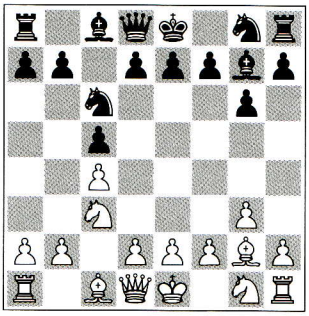
as there is 5.♘e5 d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♘c3 ♗b7 8.♕a4+! ♘d7 9.♘xd5 ♗xd5 10.♗xd5 exd5 11.♕c6 and White wins a pawn.

2. ... g7-g6

Copying White's moves is the most popular choice, but the ambitious 2...♘c6 is an interesting alternative: 3.♗g2 e5!? (a set-up marked by pawns on e5 and c5 is usually named after Botvinnik) 4.♘c3 g6 5.e3 ♗g7 6.♘ge2 ♘ge7 7.0-0 0-0, with a complex game.

3. ♗f1-g2 ♗f8-g7

4. ♘b1-c3 ♘b8-c6

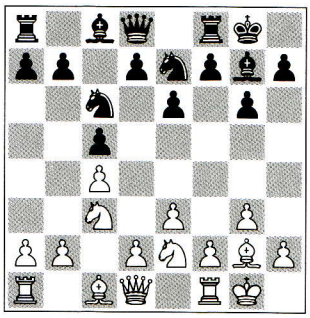


Set-ups with ♘f3 will be discussed in the section on Variation C.

B1) 5. e2-e3

A natural move that does not achieve much if Black plays symmetrically.

5. ... e7-e6
6. ♘g1-e2 ♘g8-e7
7. 0-0 0-0



8. d2-d4

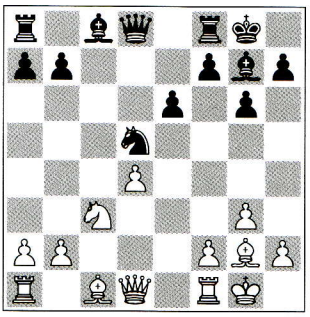
8.♘f4!?, to fight against ...d7-d5, is a worthwhile alternative.

8. ... c5xd4
9. ♘e2xd4 d7-d5
10. c4xd5 ♘c6xd4

The alternative capture 10...exd5!? is also playable.

11. e3xd4 ♘e7xd5

with equality.



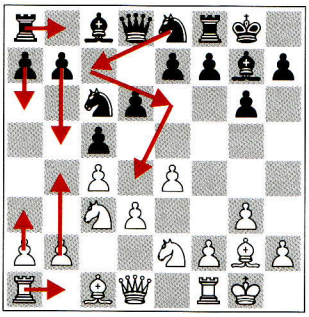
B2) 5. e2-e4

Again a **Botvinnik system**, this time played by White. As we already noted in the section called '*King's Indian 2*', Black has an optimum response that will give him a more than satisfactory game:

5. ... d7-d6
6. ♘g1-e2 ♘g8-f6

5...e6 followed by ...♘ge7 is also perfectly playable.

7. d2-d3 0-0
8. 0-0 ♘f6-e8!



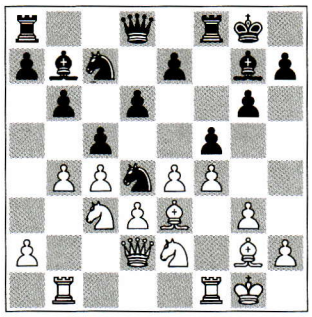
The most thematic continuation: the knight heads for the weakened d4-square, via c7-e6. The normal 8...a6 with ...♖b8 and ...b7-b5 is also satisfactory.

9. ♗c1-e3 ♘c6-d4

More often played than 9...♘c7, which allows the advance d3-d4. However,

also here White's advantage is academic after 10.d4 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♘e6.

10. ♖a1-b1 ♘e8-c7
11. b2-b4 b7-b6
12. ♕d1-d2 ♗c8-b7
13. f2-f4 f7-f5



with a balanced position that offers both players opportunities.

B3) 5. a2-a3

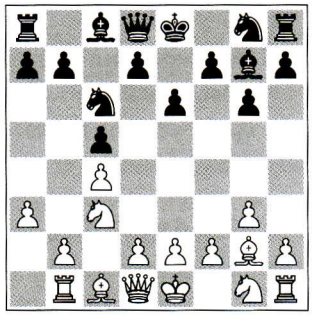
The plan to expand on the queenside is the most popular.

5. ... e7-e6

Black can play copycat with 5...a6 6.♖b1 ♖b8 7.b4 cxb4 8.axb4 b5 9.cxb5 axb5 and White will not be able to exploit the advantage of the first move.

5...d6 6.♖b1 a5 7.d3 e5 has also scored acceptably well.

6. ♖a1-b1



The most natural move. However, the gambit 6.b4!? is definitely worth a look, for example: 6...♘xb4! 7.axb4 cxb4 8.d4! bxc3 9.e3, with good compensation.

6. ... a7-a5

6...♘ge7 7.b4 has performed well for White.

7. ♘g1-h3

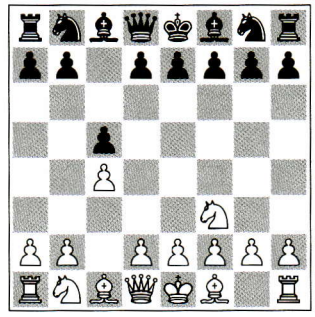
The destination is d5 via f4.

7.♘f3 transposes to lines that are discussed in the section on 2.♘f3.

7. ... ♘g8-e7
8. ♘h3-f4 0-0
9. d2-d3 ♖a8-b8
10. ♗c1-d2 b7-b6
11. 0-0 ♗c8-b7

and the position is more or less balanced.

C) 2. ♘g1-f3



The number 1 choice. White is now ready to play d2-d4, but if he wants, he can postpone this pawn push or even not play it at all.

We often arrive at this position by means of 1.♘f3 c5 2.c4.

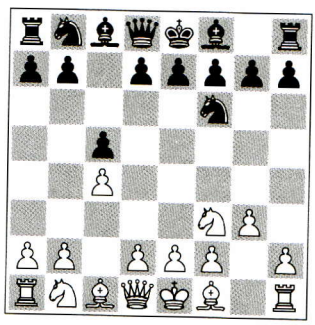
2. ... ♘g8-f6

The alternative knight move 2...♘c6 is of interest, with the veiled idea of ...e7-e5, establishing a **Botvinnik**

set-up with the black pieces, which usually inspires White to immediately push d2-d4. Now, following 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 (4...g6 5.e4 transposes to the **Accelerated Dragon**) we enter lines that will be dealt with later. On the other hand, if White continues with the classical fianchetto and plays 3.g3, after 3...g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.♘c3, Black can choose not to develop his knight to f6, which would take him into the **English Four Knights**, but rather develop it more actively to e7 (after ...e6 or ...e5), or otherwise to h6.

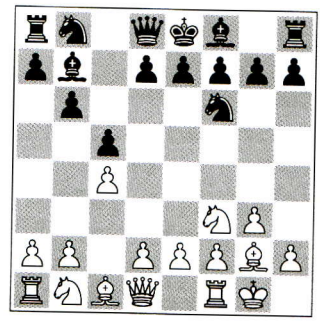
In response to an immediate 2...b6, White can obtain a favourable line against the **Hedgehog** with 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♗b7 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.f3! d6 7.e4 e6 8.♗e3, though it must be pointed out that Black's position is still playable.

C1) 3. g2-g3



This move is usually transpositional, but here we will concentrate on the lines in which White does not develop his knight to c3.

C11) 3. ... b7-b6
4. ♗f1-g2 ♗c8-b7
5. 0-0



5. ... e7-e6

5...g6 is also good; heading into the **Double Fianchetto Variation**, which will be examined further ahead.

6. b2-b3 ♗f8-e7
7. ♗c1-b2 0-0
8. d2-d4 c5xd4
9. ♕d1xd4 d7-d6
10. ♘b1-c3

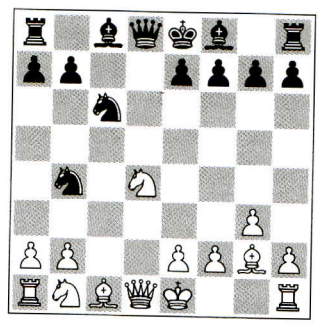
Transposing to the **Hedgehog Defence**.

C12) 3. ... d7-d5
4. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5
5. ♗f1-g2 ♘b8-c6
6. d2-d4!?

6.♘c3 ♘c7 and we have the **Rubinstein Variation**.

6. ... c5xd4
7. ♘f3xd4 ♘d5-b4!

7...e6 is a playable but very passive alternative.



8. ♘d4xc6 ♕d8xd1+
9. ♔e1xd1 ♘b4xc6
10. ♗g2xc6+

After 10.♘c3 ♗d7 the position is equal.

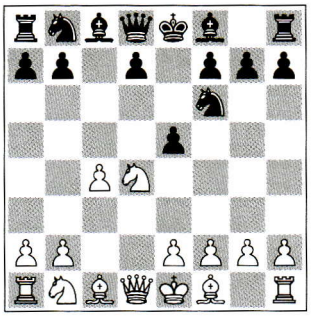
10. ... b7xc6
11. ♗c1-e3 e7-e5
12. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4
13. ♖a1-c1 ♗c8-e6

Black's possession of the bishop pair compensates for his compromised pawn structure.

C2) 3. d2-d4

This position is often reached by means of 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 when White would rather not face the **Benoni** or the **Benko** with 3.d5 and opts for the timid 3.♘f3.

3. ... c5xd4
4. ♘f3xd4 e7-e5!?



This ambitious continuation was a favourite of the young Kasparov.

5. ♘d4-b5 d7-d5!

Here is the idea: Black sacrifices a pawn in order to obtain active piece play.

The immediate 5...♗c5?! is bad because of 6.♘d6+.

6. c4xd5 ♗f8-c5!

Naturally, 6...♘xd5?? cannot be played due to 7.♕xd5.

7. e2-e3

7.♘5c3 0-0 8.e3 transposes.

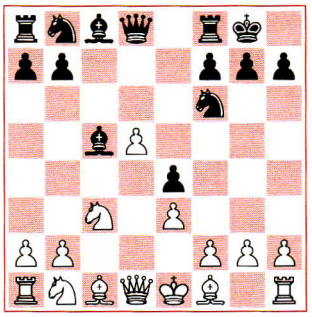
7. ... 0-0

Now Black is ready to recapture the d5 pawn.

8. ♘b5-c3

The knight would not have an active role on b5.

8. ... e5-e4!



Gaining space and making it difficult for White to develop; the pieces on the queenside are getting in each other's way.

9. ♗f1-e2 ♕d8-e7

Black is overprotecting the e4 outpost, as was recommended by Nimzowitsch.

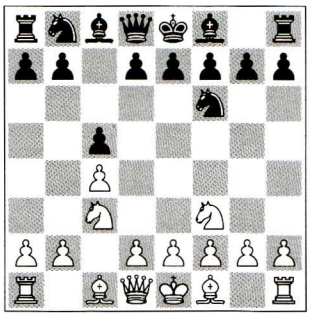
10. a2-a3 ♖f8-d8
11. b2-b4 ♗c5-d6

On the other retreat, 11...♗b6, White plays 12.♕b3.

12. ♗c1-b2 a7-a5!
13. b4-b5 ♘b8-d7

Black has excellent compensation for his weakened dark-square complex. While Black may not have an objective advantage, his performance results are above average.

C3) 3. ♘b1-c3



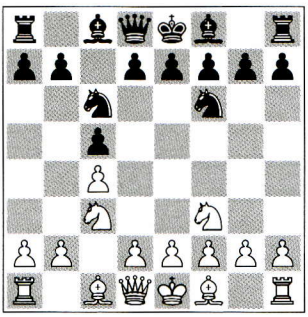
Black can now choose from four principal approaches:

- immediately advance his pawn to d5 in **Grünfeld** fashion.
- a queenside fianchetto, establishing a **Hedgehog** formation.
- move his pawn to e6 to support a later ...d7-d5 advance.
- develop his other knight and wait and see what White does.

3...g6 is also playable, but after 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♗g7 6.e4, we are in the **Accelerated Dragon** (see Volume 1).

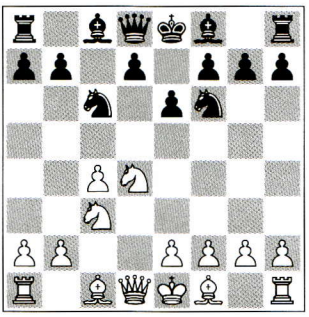
Four Knights Variation

1. c2-c4 c7-c5
2. ♘g1-f3 ♘g8-f6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♘b8-c6



At this point, White can immediately play d2-d4, or otherwise fianchetto on the kingside and make this advance after he has completed development.

A) 4. d2-d4 c5xd4
5. ♘f3xd4 e7-e6



One of the most important positions in the English: Black maintains the option of developing the bishop to b4 or c5, and thus discourages White from prematurely occupying the centre.
Now White has three continuations to choose from, given that 6.e4 (with a

position that can be reached via the **Taimanov Sicilian**) does not cause Black any difficulties after 6...♗b4 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.♗d3 e5.

A1) 6. a2-a3

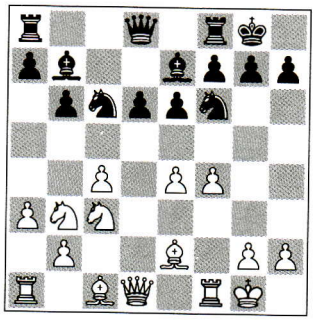
As with the analogous line in the **Sicilian Kan Variation**, White puts a stop to ♗b4 in order to physically occupy the centre.

6. ... ♗f8-c5

The most popular move.

The immediate freeing advance 6...d5 leaves White with an edge after 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.♗d2.

7. ♘d4-b3 ♗c5-e7
8. e2-e4 0-0
9. ♗f1-e2 b7-b6
10. 0-0 ♗c8-b7
11. f2-f4 d7-d6



A typical **Hedgehog** position. The moves a3 and ♘b3 do not strike you as being particularly effective. However, in these lines characterized by a lot of manoeuvring, loss of tempi is often of little significance.

A2) 6. ♘d4-b5

Thematic but overly ambitious: White seeks to exploit the weak dark squares d6 and c7 with the threat of ♘d6+ or otherwise with ♗f4, but at the price of backward development.

This approach was very popular in the 1980's, but now it is a little out of favour.

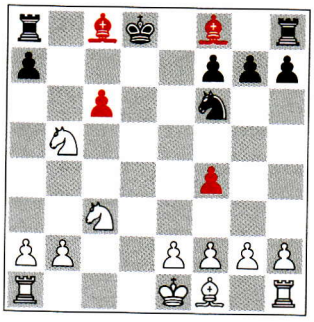
6. ... d7-d5

The most common reply. Black chooses a radical solution to eliminate the weakness on d6, putting his faith in his lead in development, but given the drawish nature of the lines that follow, some more go-getting players have experimented with 6...♗c5!? or 6...♗b4, which have produced acceptable results after 7.♗f4 0-0 8.♗c7 ♕e7 9.♗d6 ♗xd6 10.♕xd6 ♕d8.

7. ♗c1-f4

Forcing 7...e5, with the loss of the d5 pawn. The exchange 7.cxd5 does not give White anything special: 7...♘xd5 8.♘xd5 exd5 9.♕xd5. This last move is a common tactical motif, but in this case Black achieves optimum counterplay after 9...♗b4+ 10.♗d2 ♕e7!.

7. ... e6-e5
8. c4xd5 e5xf4
9. d5xc6 b7xc6
10. ♕d1xd8+ ♔e8xd8



White's pawn structure is clearly better, and in addition the black king is awkwardly placed.

However, first impressions are not always reliable: the bishop pair and the pawn on f4 (although doubled, it obstructs White's kingside development) provide Black with resources.

11. ♖a1-d1+

Recently some have tried 11.♘d4!?, but after 11...♗b7!, Black does not have any problems.

11.0-0-0+ also gives Black adequate play following 11...♗d7 12.♘d6 ♗xd6 13.♖xd6 ♘g4.

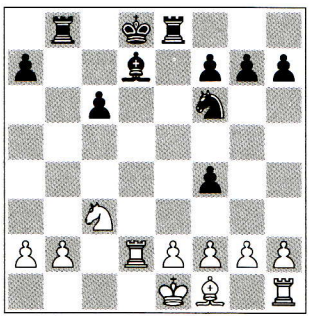
11. ... ♗c8-d7

12. ♘b5-d6 ♗f8xd6

12...♖b8!? – the actual merits of this bold attempt to inject some life into the position may be debatable, but it is certainly inspired: after 13.♘xf7+ ♔e8 14.♘xh8 ♖xb2, the threat of 15...♗b4 is not easy to deal with.

13. ♖d1xd6 ♖a8-b8

14. ♖d6-d2 ♖h8-e8



Most of the games that reach this position end in a draw.

A3) 6. g2-g3 ♕d8-b6

This is the most popular choice and the one that offers the most chances of victory: the d4 knight is chased away from the centre and in many lines the c4 pawn becomes a target.

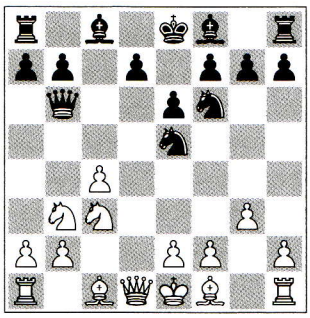
6...♗b4 takes us into a **Nimzo-Indian** line. Otherwise 6...♗c5 7.♘b3 ♗b4 8.♗g2 b6!? 9.0-0 ♗a6 looks promising.

7. ♘d4-b3

The alternative 7.♘db5 has enjoyed moments of popularity. However, after 7...♘e5 (if Black plays 7...♗c5, White often blithely ignores the attack on f2 and plays 8.♗g2!) 8.♗g2 a6 (8...♘xc4 9.♕a4 is nice for White) 9.♕a4 ♖b8 10.♗e3 ♗c5 11.♗xc5 ♕xc5 12.♕a3 b6 13.♘d6+ ♔e7, chances are equal.

7. ... ♘c6-e5!

The most logical move: White must make some unnatural-looking moves to defend c4.



The other option of 7...d5, which produces an isolated d-pawn, is playable. However, most black players prefer the more elastic knight move, which is the main line.

8. e2-e4 ♗f8-b4

9. ♕d1-e2

The e4 pawn must be defended without leaving the c4 pawn hanging.

9. ... d7-d6

Stopping f2-f4 and a subsequent e4-e5.

10. f2-f4

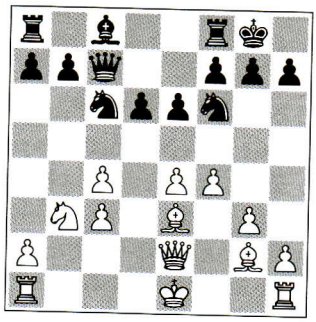
The most frequent choice.

The move 10.♗d2!? is interesting as it prevents doubled c-pawns and makes way for possible queenside castling.

10. ... ♘e5-c6
11. ♗c1-e3 ♗b4xc3+

An ambitious move that highlights the eternal contest between the static and dynamic features of a position.

12. b2xc3 ♕b6-c7
13. ♗f1-g2 0-0



White has the two bishops and a space advantage; Black has the better pawn structure. Who benefits the most from his respective advantage? Difficult to say. However, one thing is for sure: Black's results are satisfactory.

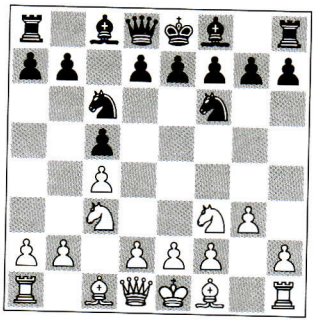
14. c4-c5

It seems logical to exchange off the doubled pawn.

14. ... d6xc5
15. ♗e3xc5 ♖f8-d8
16. e4-e5 ♘c6-a5!

Black has sufficient counterplay.

B) 4. g2-g3

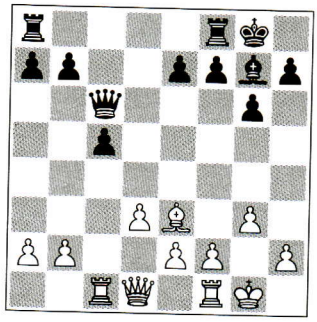


4. ... g7-g6

4...d5 5.cxd5 (5.d4!? is worth a look) 5...♘xd5 6.♗g2 transposes to the **Rubinstein Variation**, which will be discussed later.

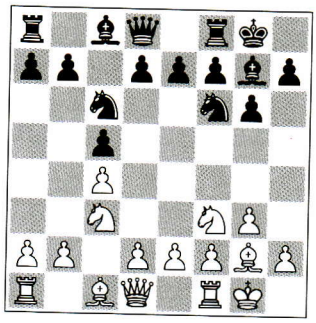
5. ♗f1-g2 ♗f8-g7
6. 0-0

If Black now plays an early 6...d5, after 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♘xd5 ♕xd5 9.d3 0-0 10.♗e3 ♗d7 11.♘d4 ♕d6 12.♘xc6 ♗xc6 13.♗xc6 ♕xc6 14.♖c1



White's advantage appears to be minimal, but in the hands of a strong positional player it often proves to be unexpectedly meaningful.

6. ... 0-0



Even though this **Symmetrical Variation** of the **Symmetrical English** has the defect of giving Black few objective chances of a win, players still continue

to choose it and this position is frequently reached. This is probably due to the fact that it is not easy for White to make headway, or perhaps quite simply aping White's moves for a while may have some appeal for a lazy black player!

7. d2-d4

If White is to exploit his extra tempo, he must open the position; other moves do not have any punch and will not create problems for Black.

7. ... c5xd4

7...d6 is equally common, but it is not the concern of this book as it transposes to the **Fianchetto Variation** of the **King's Indian Defence**, which is examined in the third volume of this series.

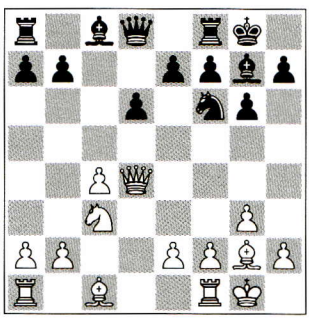
8. ♘f3xd4 ♘c6xd4

The simple aim is to play ...d7-d6 without losing the pawn on c6.

This is easily the most played continuation, notwithstanding the fact that there are several attractive alternatives, such as the gambit 8...d6!? or 8...♘g4.

9. ♕d1xd4 d7-d6

And now we have another key English position.



10. ♕d4-d3

By far and away the most popular choice: the white queen leaves the dangerous diagonal and places herself on a safer square.

Even though the alternatives are less frequently played, they appear to be promising.

10.♕h4 is highly natural, and so it comes as no surprise to see it used as far back as 1924, when Euwe employed it against Colle. However, after 10...♖b8 11.♗h6 ♗e6 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 13.♖ac1 ♕a5, Black has prepared the ...b7-b5 advance, with sufficient counterplay.

Following 10.♕d2 ♗e6! 11.b3 d5, Black gains immediate equality.

The interesting 10.♗g5 was used by Fischer. The idea is after 10...h6, (10...♗e6!) to continue with 11.♗xf6!? ♗xf6 12.♕d2 ♗g7 13.♖fd1, which threatens c5, with an unclear position; do not forget that at this point the move *13...♕a5? is not on for tactical reasons: 14.♘d5! ♕d8 15.c5!, and White has a big advantage.*

10. ... a7-a6

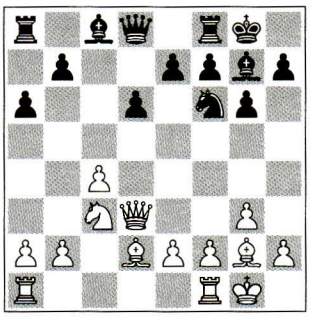
Always a useful move: the advance ...b7-b5 is one of Black's primary objectives.

The immediate 10...♕a5 is possible, but Black must weigh up the consequences of 11.♘b5!? a6 12.♗d2.

Sacrificing the b7 pawn with 10...♗e6 is of debatable merit; after 11.♗xb7 ♖b8 12.♗g2 ♕a5 13.b3! ♖xb3 14.axb3 ♕xa1 15.♘b5, White is better.

10...♗f5!? is worthy of consideration: after 11.e4 ♗e6, White may have conquered the centre with gain of tempo, but the scope of the g2 bishop is now lessened.

11. ♗c1-d2



Discouraging ...♕a5, which in recent years has become Black's favourite. The text is now more popular than the old favourite 11.♗e3, which is still promising: 11...♘g4 12.♗d4 ♘e5 13.♕d1 ♖b8 (the c4 pawn cannot be captured) 14.♖c1 ♗e6 15.♘d5 b5 16.c5!.

11. ... ♖a8-b8

12. c4-c5!?

The mechanical 12.♖ac1 can be met by 12...b5!?, which would appear to give Black sufficient counterplay.

12. ... ♗c8-f5!

Capturing straight away puts White ahead: 12...dxc5 13.♕xd8! ♖xd8 14.♗f4 ♖a8 15.♘a4 ♘d7 16.♖fd1.

13. e2-e4 d6xc5

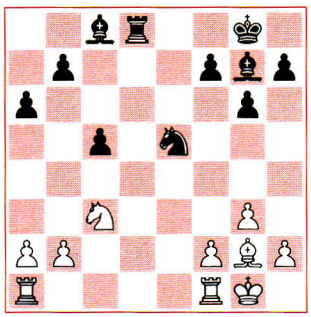
14. ♕d3xd8 ♖b8xd8

15. ♗d2-g5! ♗f5-c8

16. e4-e5 ♘f6-g4

17. ♗g5xe7 ♘g4xe5

18. ♗e7xd8 ♖f8xd8



White has won the exchange but Black has compensation (a pawn and the bishop pair). Whether this is sufficient is difficult to assess.

Petrosian,Tigran
Fischer,Robert
Belgrade World-URS 1970 (2)

1.c4 g6 2.♘c3 c5 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 ♘c6 5.♘f3 e6 6.0-0 ♘ge7 7.d3 0-0 8.♗d2 d5 9.a3 b6 10.♖b1 ♗b7 11.b4 cxb4 12.axb4 dxc4 13.dxc4 ♖c8 14.c5 bxc5 15.bxc5 ♘a5 16.♘a4 ♗c6 17.♕c2 ♘b7 18.♖fc1 ♕d7 19.♘e1 ♘d5 20.♘b2 ♗b5 21.♘ed3 ♗d4 22.♕b3 ♘xc5 23.♘xc5 ♖xc5 24.♖xc5 ♗xc5 25.♘d3 ♗xd3 26.♕xd3 ♖d8 27.♗f3 ♕c7 28.♗g5 ♗e7 29.♗xe7 ♕xe7 30.♕d4 e5 31.♕c4 ♘b6 32.♕c2 ♖c8 33.♕d3 ♖c4 34.♗g2 ♕c7 35.♕a3 ♖c3 36.♕a5 ♖c5 37.♕a3 a5 38.h4 ♘c4 39.♕d3 ♘d6 40.♔h2 ♔g7 41.♖d1 ♘e8 42.♕d7 ♕xd7 43.♖xd7 ♘f6 44.♖a7 ♘g4+ 45.♔g1 ♖c1+ 46.♗f1 ♖a1 47.e4 a4 48.♔g2 ♖a2 49.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 50.♗c4+ ♔e7 51.♗xa2 a3 52.♔f3 ♘f6 53.♔e3 ♔d6 54.f4 ♘d7 55.♗b1 ♘c5 56.f5 ♘a6 57.g4 ♘b4 58.fxg6 hxg6 59.h5 gxh5 60.gxh5 ♔e6 61.♔d2 ♔f6 62.♔c3 a2 63.♗xa2 ♘xa2+ 64.♔b2 ♘b4 65.♔c3 ♘c6 66.♔c4 ♘d4 0-1

Aseev,Konstantin
Smirin,Ilya
Klaipeda 1988 (12)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘f3 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5 5.♘b5 d5 6.cxd5 ♗c5 7.♘5c3 0-0 8.h3 ♗f5 9.e3 ♗g6 10.g4 e4 11.♗g2 ♘a6 12.g5 ♘b4 13.gxf6 ♘d3+ 14.♔d2 ♕xf6 15.♖f1

♖fe8 16.a3 b5 17.♖a2 h5 18.♘xb5 ♕g5 19.♗h1 ♘xf2 20.♕e2 ♘xh1 21.♖xh1 ♕xd5+ 22.♔c2 ♕xa2 23.♘1c3 ♕e6 24.♘c7 ♕f5 25.♔b1 ♕f3 26.♕e1 ♖ac8 27.♘xe8 ♖xe8 28.h4 ♖d8 29.♖f1 ♕h3 30.♖h1 ♕d7 31.♔a1 ♖b8 32.♕g3 ♗d6 33.♕g5 ♕f5 34.♕g1 ♗e5 35.♘e2 f6 36.♘d4 ♗xd4 37.exd4 ♖b3 38.d5 ♔h7 39.♕xa7 ♕xd5 40.♖g1 ♗f7 41.♔b1 ♖d3 0-1

Kortchnoi,Viktor
Züger,Beat

Lenzerheide ch-SUI 2006 (1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘f3 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5 5.♘b5 d5 6.cxd5 ♗c5 7.♘5c3 0-0 8.g3 ♕b6 9.e3 ♗g4 10.♗e2 ♗xe2 11.♕xe2 e4 12.g4 ♖d8 13.0-0 ♘a6 14.♘d2 ♘xd5 15.♘dxe4 ♕g6 16.♕f3 ♘xc3 17.bxc3 ♗f8 18.♘g3 b6 19.e4 ♖ac8 20.♗f4 ♘c5 21.♖ad1 ♖xd1 22.♖xd1 ♕c6 23.♗e3 ♘e6 24.♖d3 ♕b5 25.♕e2 ♕a4 26.♕d2 ♕c4 27.h4 g6 28.♖d7 ♖c7 29.♖xc7 ♕xc7 30.h5 ♗g7 31.♘e2 ♕c4 32.h6 ♗f8 33.f3 ♗c5 34.♘d4 ♗e7 35.♘xe6 ♕xe6 36.♕d5 ♕xd5 37.exd5 g5 38.f4 f6 39.♔f2 ♔f7 1-0

Pelletier,Yannick
Macieja,Bartlomiej

Stepanakert 2004 (5)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 e6 6.♘db5 d5 7.♗f4 e5 8.cxd5 exf4 9.dxc6 bxc6 10.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11.0-0-0+ ♗d7 12.♘d6 ♔c7 13.♘xf7 ♖g8 14.♘e5 ♗f5 15.♘d3 ♘g4 16.h3 ♗xd3 17.hxg4 ♗g6 18.g3 fxg3 19.f4 ♗d6 20.f5 ♗f7 21.♖xh7 ♗e5 22.♗g2 ♖ab8 23.♔c2 ♗xa2 24.♖a1 ♗b3+ 25.♔c1 ♖h8 26.♖xh8 ♖xh8 27.♔d2 ♖h2 28.♖g1 a5 29.♔d3 a4 30.♗f3 ♖h8 31.♖a1 ♖d8+ 32.♔e3 ♖e8 33.♔d3 ♖d8+ 34.♔e3 ♗xc3 35.bxc3 ♖d1 36.♖a3 ♖f1 37.♗g2 ♖f2 38.♗f3 ♖f1 39.♗g2 ♖c1 40.♗e4 ♖xc3+ 41.♗d3 ♖c1 42.♔f3 c5 43.♔xg3 c4 44.♗e4 c3 45.♔f4 ♔d6 0-1

Kortchnoi,Viktor
Portisch,Lajos

Bad Kissingen match 1983 (3)

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 e6 6.♘db5 d5 7.♗f4 e5 8.cxd5 exf4 9.dxc6 bxc6 10.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11.♘d4 ♔c7 12.g3 ♗c5 13.♖c1 fxg3 14.hxg3 ♗a6 15.♘xc6 ♗b7 16.♘a4 ♗xf2+ 17.♔xf2 ♘e4+ 18.♔g1 ♗xc6 19.♗g2 ♖ae8 20.♖h4 f5 21.g4 f4 22.♖xc6+ ♔xc6 23.♘c3 ♔c5 24.♗xe4 ♔d4 25.♗f3 ♖b8 26.♘a4 ♖b4 27.♖h5 ♖d8 28.b3 h6 29.♔f1 ♖d6 30.♖f5 g5 31.♖f7 ♔e5 32.♖xa7 ♖d2 33.♘c5 ♖bd4 34.♖a6 ♖d6 35.♖a5 1-0

Ivanchuk,Vasily
Khalifman,Alexander

Elista 1998 (5)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘f3 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 e6 6.g3 ♕b6 7.♘b3 ♘e5 8.e4 ♗b4 9.♕e2 d6 10.♗d2 0-0 11.0-0-0 a5 12.f4 a4 13.fxe5 axb3 14.a3 ♗xc3 15.♗xc3 dxe5 16.♗xe5 ♕c6 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.♕g4+ ♔h8 19.♕f3 e5 20.♖d5 f5 21.♖xe5 ♗e6 22.♖b5 f6 23.♖xb3 fxe4 24.♕e3 ♗xc4 25.♗xc4 ♕xc4+ 26.♔b1 ♕d5 27.♖b4 ♖ae8 28.♖c1

♖f7 29.♖c5 ♕d1+ 30.♔a2 ♕d6 31.♖xe4 ♖xe4 32.♖c8+ ♔g7 33.♕xe4 f5 34.♕c4 h5 35.♖h8 ♕g6 36.♕d4+ ♖f6 37.♖d8 ♕f7+ 38.b3 ♕e6 39.♖d7+ ♔g6 40.♖xb7 h4 41.a4 ♕c6 42.♖b8 h3 43.♖g8+ ♔f7 44.♖h8 ♔g7 45.♖h4 ♔g6 46.♕e3 ♔f7 47.♕a7+ ♔g8 48.♕h7+ 1-0

Ivanchuk,Vasily
Sokolov,Ivan
Wijk aan Zee 1999 (4)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 e6 6.g3 ♕b6 7.♘b3 ♘e5 8.e4 ♗b4 9.♕e2 ♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 d6 11.f4 ♘c6 12.♗a3 e5 13.♗xd6 exf4 14.c5 ♕a6 15.♕xa6 bxa6 16.e5 ♘g4 17.♗g2 ♗d7 18.gxf4 ♘e3 19.♗e4 ♖c8 20.♖g1 g6 21.♗d3 ♗f5 22.♗xa6 ♘c2+ 23.♔f2 ♘xa1 24.♖xa1 ♖d8 25.♘d4 ♗d7 26.♖b1 ♘e7 27.♖b7 ♘c8 28.♗c7 0-0 29.♗xd8 ♖xd8 30.c6 ♗h3 31.♔g3 1-0

Lobron,Eric
Kramnik,Vladimir
Dortmund 1995 (4)

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6 6.g3 ♕b6 7.♘b3 ♘e5 8.e4 ♗b4 9.♕e2 d6 10.f4 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♗xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♕c7 13.♗g2 0-0 14.0-0 b6 15.g4 ♗b7 16.g5 ♘d7 17.♖f3 ♘e7 18.♖h3 ♖fc8 19.♕h5 ♘f8 20.♘d2 d5 21.cxd5 exd5 22.f5 ♕xc3 23.♖f1 d4 24.♗f4 d3 25.♕h4 ♖e8 26.♕g3 ♖ad8 27.♖f2 ♕a1+ 28.♖f1 ♕b2 29.♖f2 ♕xa2 30.♗e5 ♘xf5 31.exf5 ♗xg2 32.♔xg2 ♕d5+ 33.♘f3 ♖xe5 34.♕xe5 ♕xe5 35.♘xe5 d2 36.♖xd2 ♖xd2+ 37.♔f3 0-1

Carlsen,Magnus
Dominguez Perez,Lenier
Linares 2009 (2)

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6 6.g3 ♕b6 7.♘db5 ♘e5 8.♗f4 ♘fg4 9.♕a4 g5 10.♗xe5 ♕xf2+ 11.♔d1 ♘xe5 12.♘c7+ ♔d8 13.♘xa8 ♕d4+ 14.♔c2 ♘xc4 15.♔b3 ♘d2+ 16.♔c2 ♘c4 17.♔b3 ♘d2+ 18.♔c2 ½-½

Karpov,Anatoly
Ribli,Zoltan
Amsterdam IBM 1980 (13)

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 g6 7.0-0 ♗g7 8.♘xd5 ♕xd5 9.d3 0-0 10.♗e3 ♗d7 11.♘d4 ♕d6 12.♘xc6 ♗xc6 13.♗xc6 ♕xc6 14.♖c1 ♕e6 15.♖xc5 ♕xa2 16.♖b5 b6 17.♕a1 ♕xa1 18.♖xa1 ♖fb8 19.♖a6 ♔f8 20.♖b4 ♗e5 21.♖ba4 b5 22.♖a2 ♖b7 23.b3 ♗b8 24.♗c5 ♔e8 25.d4 ♔d7 26.e4 e6 27.b4 ♔c8 28.d5 exd5 29.exd5 ♖d7 30.d6 ♖d8 31.♔g2 ♔d7 32.♖e2 ♔c8 33.♖e7 ♖d7 34.♖a2 a5 35.♖c2 1-0

Andersson,Ulf
Roiz,Michael
Istanbul Ech 2003 (6)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.0-0 d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♘c3 c5 8.♘xd5 ♕xd5 9.d3 ♘c6 10.♗e3 ♗d7 11.♘d4 ♕d6 12.♘xc6 ♗xc6 13.♗xc6 ♕xc6 14.♖c1 ♕e6 15.♖xc5 ♕xa2 16.♖b5 ♕a6 17.♕b3 b6 18.♖b4 ♖fc8 19.♖a4 ♕b7 20.♖fa1 h5 21.h4 ♖c6 22.♖a6 e6 23.♕a4 b5 24.♖xa7 bxa4 25.♖xb7 ♖c2 26.♖a2 ♖xe2 27.♖b4 ♖d8 ½-½

Fischer,Robert
Spassky,Boris
Reykjavik Wch-match 1972 (8)

1.c4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.d4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘xd4 9.♕xd4 d6 10.♗g5 ♗e6 11.♕f4 ♕a5 12.♖ac1 ♖ab8 13.b3 ♖fc8 14.♕d2 a6 15.♗e3 b5 16.♗a7 bxc4 17.♗xb8 ♖xb8 18.bxc4 ♗xc4 19.♖fd1 ♘d7 20.♘d5 ♕xd2 21.♘xe7+ ♔f8 22.♖xd2 ♔xe7 23.♖xc4 ♖b1+ 24.♗f1 ♘c5 25.♔g2 a5 26.e4 ♗a1 27.f4 f6 28.♖e2 ♔e6 29.♖ec2 ♗b2 30.♗e2 h5 31.♖d2 ♗a3 32.f5+ gxf5 33.exf5+ ♔e5 34.♖cd4 ♔xf5 35.♖d5+ ♔e6 36.♖xd6+ ♔e7 37.♖c6 1-0

Filippov,Valery
Stojanovski,Dejan
St Vincent tt 2005 (4)

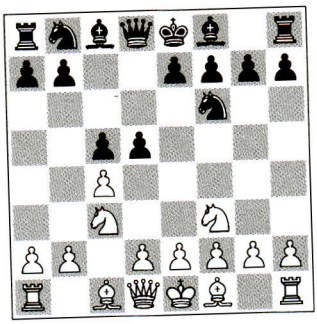
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘c3 g6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♘c6 6.g3 ♗g7 7.♗g2 0-0 8.0-0 ♘xd4 9.♕xd4 d6 10.♕d3 a6 11.♗e3 ♗f5 12.♕d2 ♕d7 13.♖fd1 ♗h3 14.♗h1 ♖ac8 15.c5 dxc5 16.♕xd7 ♘xd7 17.♗xb7 ♖b8 18.♗xa6 ♖xb2 19.♘d5 ♖a8 20.♗c8 ♗f8 21.♗xd7 ♗xd7 22.♘c7 ♖d8 23.♘a6 ♖a8 24.♘c7 ♖d8 25.a4 ♖b7 26.♘a6 e6 27.♘xc5 ♗xc5 28.♗xc5 ♖c8 29.♗d4 f5 30.a5 ♗c6 31.♖dc1 ♖bb8 32.a6 ♗d5 33.a7 ♖a8 34.f3 ♔f7 35.♔f2 g5 36.h4 h6 37.♔e3 ♖xc1 38.♖xc1 e5 39.♗b6 f4+ 40.gxf4 gxf4+ 41.♔d3 ♖e8 42.♗c7 ♔f6 43.♖c5 ♗a8 44.♖b5 e4+ 45.fxe4 ♗xe4+ 46.♔d4 ♗g2 47.♗e5+ ♔f5 48.♖b8 ♖e7 49.♖f8+ ♔g4 50.♖g8+ 1-0

Euwe,Machgielis
Colle,Edgar
Zutphen m 1924 (7)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.d4 cxd4 6.♘xd4 0-0 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♘c3 ♘xd4 9.♕xd4 d6 10.♕h4 ♖e8 11.♗h6 ♗h8 12.h3 ♕b6 13.b3 ♗d7 14.♖ac1 ♗c6 15.e4 ♕a5 16.♖c2 ♖ac8 17.♘d5 ♗xd5 18.exd5 b5 19.♗d2 ♕a6 20.♖fc1 bxc4 21.♗f1 ♘d7 22.♗xc4 ♕b7 23.♕e4 ♘b6 24.♗b5 ♖xc2 25.♖xc2 ♖c8 26.♖xc8+ ♘xc8 27.♕c4 ♘b6 28.♕c6 ♕c8 29.♗e3 ♕b8 30.a4 ♗f6 31.a5 ♘a8 32.a6 1-0

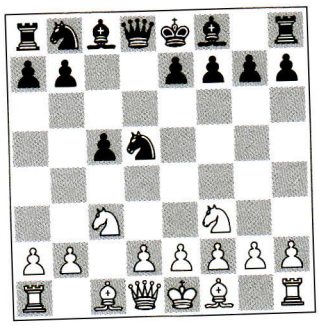
Asymmetrical Variation

1. c2-c4 c7-c5
2. ♘g1-f3 ♘g8-f6
3. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5



The **Asymmetrical Variation** of the **Symmetrical English** would appear to be a contradiction in terms! Black fearlessly takes possession of the centre and commits himself to a complex game, but if he knows what he is doing he should be able to obtain a satisfactory position.

4. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5



At this point White can choose from four main options; curiously, they are all pawn moves:

A) 5. e2-e3

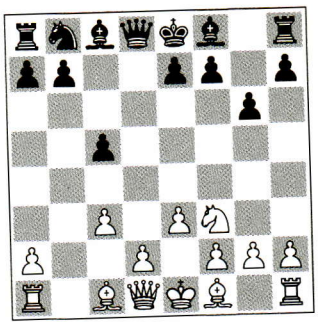
Less innocuous than you would imagine: if Black is not careful, he can find himself with a passive position that denies him counterplay.

5. ... ♘d5xc3

5...e6 6.d4 transposes to a **Semi-Tarrasch** line (Vol. 2) that is without doubt solid, but unlikely to appeal to a player who would adopt this ambitious asymmetrical line.

The obvious 5...♘c6 represents a classic example of a natural-looking move that gives an advantage to your opponent – in this particular case White is better after 6.♗b5!.

6. b2xc3 g7-g6



7. ♗f1-b5+

7.d4 transposes to Variation B22, whereas the original 7.♕a4+ ♘d7! 8.♗a3 ♕c7 9.♗e2 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖ab1 b6 does not offer White any more than equality.

7. ... ♘b8-d7

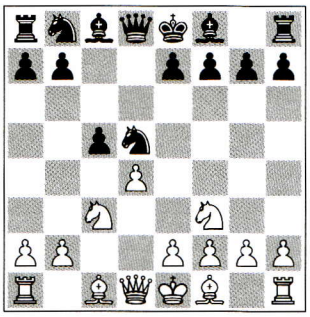
7...♗d7 8.♕b3 ♕c7 9.♖b1 gives White a small plus.

8. ♗c1-a3 ♕d8-c7
9. 0-0 a7-a6
10. ♗b5xd7+ ♗c8xd7
11. d2-d4 ♗f8-g7!

And neither side has the advantage: after **12.♗xc5** there is **12...b6 13.♗b4 a5,**

and following **14...♕xc3** Black does not have any particular worries.

B) 5. d2-d4



The move with the best statistical performance.

There are possible transpositions to the **Queen's Pawn Game** or to the **Grünfeld**, but here we will only consider those lines relevant to the **English**.

Now Black has two main paths he can go down, given that 5...e6 leads into the **Semi-Tarrasch** and 5...g6, with the intention of playing the **Grünfeld**, would appear to be nice for White after 6.♘xd5 ♕xd5 7.♕c2!.

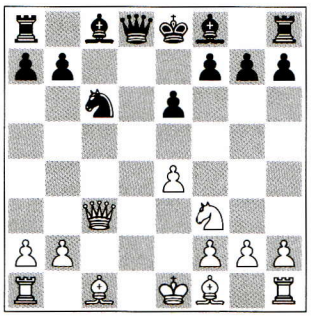
B1) 5. ... c5xd4
6. ♕d1xd4 ♘d5xc3

6...e6 7.e4 ♘xc3 8.♕xc3 ♘c6 transposes to the main line.

7. ♕d4xc3

7.♕xd8+ has been suggested by several computer programs. Normally this endorsement would be encouraging, but here the move looks dubious: after 7...♔xd8 8.bxc3, the weak pawn structure seems to be too high a price to pay for a temporary lead in development.

7. ... ♘b8-c6
8. e2-e4 e7-e6



This is the most solid move and probably the best one as well.

♗ *as there is 9.♗b5.*

8...♗g4 may be playable, but White has scored excellently after 9.♗b5 ♖c8 10.♗f4!

9. ♗f1-b5

Parrying the threat of 9...♗b4 and attacking c6. Other worthwhile options to consider are 9.a3 and 9.♗d2, followed by the more sober development of the king's bishop on e2.

9. ... ♗c8-d7
10. 0-0 ♕d8-b6
11. a2-a4!?

Weakening b4, but maintaining the tension: the idea is to play ♗e3.

11. ... ♕b6-c5
12. ♕c3-d3 ♕c5-d6
13. ♕d3-e2 ♕d6-c7

Even though Black has made four queen moves in a row, his position is still playable!

Now after the committal 14.e5!?, which gains space but concedes the d5-square, the position remains balanced.

B2) 5. ... ♘d5xc3
6. b2xc3 g7-g6

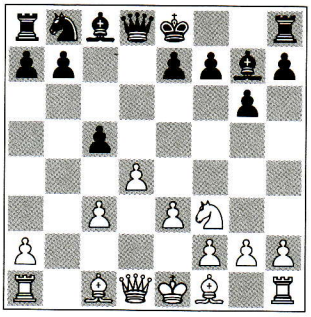
6...e6 7.e4 goes into the **Semi-Tarrasch**.

7. e2-e3!?

Solid but not without venom.

7.e4 ♗g7 transposes to the **Exchange Variation** of the **Grünfeld** (Vol. 2).

7. ... ♗f8-g7



There is less pressure being exerted on d4 than we see in the **Grünfeld**, but at the same time, White's centre is less threatening.

8. ♗f1-d3

The most natural, but 8.♗b5+!?, along the lines of Variation B1, is currently fashionable: 8...♘d7 (8...♗d7!?) 9.0-0 0-0 10.a4 ♕c7 11.♗a3 b6 12.a5, with uncomfortable pressure on the queenside.

8.♗e2 is also playable, but the bishop looks more active on d3.

8. ... 0-0

9. 0-0 ♕d8-c7

In reply to 9...♘c6 the move 10.♗a3! is good:

10. ♖a1-b1 b7-b6

11. ♕d1-e2 ♖f8-d8

If Black tries 11...♗b7, White will reply with 12.e4!.

12. ♖f1-d1

After 12.e4, Black can play 12...♗g4, and White's centre looks shaky.

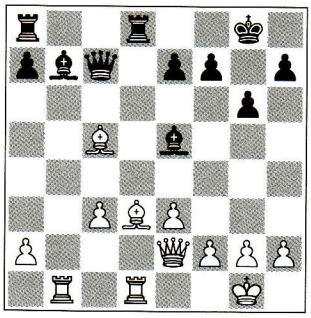
12. ... ♘b8-c6

13. ♗c1-a3 ♗c8-b7!

14. d4xc5 b6xc5

15. ♗a3xc5 ♘c6-e5

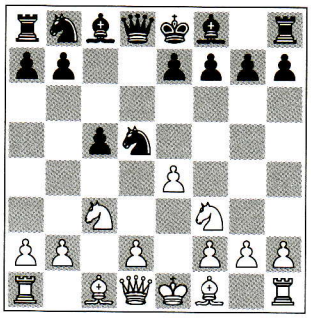
16. ♘f3xe5 ♗g7xe5



17. g2-g3 ♗e5xc3

with a balanced game.

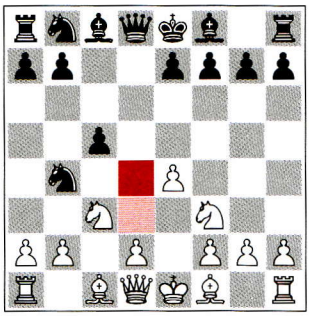
C) 5. e2-e4



One of Nimzowitsch's countless contributions to opening theory; this was frequently seen in the 1970's and 80's, but now it is not so popular. Nonetheless, it still remains a very tricky line to play against.

The move is to all appearances anti-positional (the weak d3-square is not pretty), but in reality White has compensation in the form of his better development and superior control of the centre.

5. ... ♘d5-b4



The most thematic. However, a more cautious player could opt for 5...♘xc3. Now the usual 6.bxc3 often results in a transposition to the **Grünfeld**, whereas the poisonous 6.dxc3!? has proved to be unexpectedly effective: after an exchange of queens, the weak c5 pawn allows White a powerful initiative on the queenside, with an impressive performance of 65%.

Let's go back to 5...♘b4. Now the advance d2-d4 followed by a knight capture is not possible as there is the well known tactical sequence ...♕xd4, ♕xd4 ♘c2+.

Now White has two alternatives of roughly equal worth:

C1) 6. ♗f1-b5+

The plan is to weaken Black's control of the centre and then push d2-d4.

6. ... ♘b8-c6

6...♗d7 7.a3! has proved to be good for White.

7. d2-d4

Now or never: White sacrifices a pawn, as it is the only way to give Black a headache.

7. ... c5xd4

8. a2-a3

Naturally 8.♘xd4?? allows the tactic 8...♕xd4!.

8. ... d4xc3

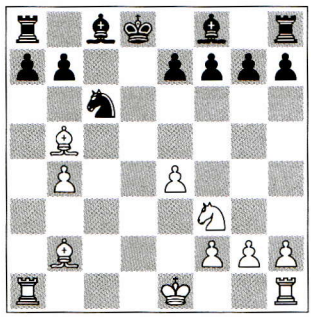
The move 8...♗d7!? has shown itself to be playable: 9.axb4 dxc3.

9. ♕d1xd8+ ♔e8xd8

10. a3xb4 c3xb2

10...♘xb4 11.0-0 leaves Black too far behind in development.

11. ♗c1xb2



White's surplus in space and better development clearly compensate for the pawn, but with the queens off the board it would not be appropriate to speak of an advantage. In addition, Black has a nice solid position that is free of weaknesses, and once the best defensive measures were discovered, Black achieved the satisfactory performance that you would logically expect.

The surprising thing is that the material-hungry chess engines show a small preference for White's position!

11. ... e7-e6

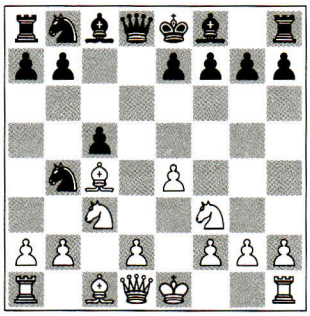
11...f6 12.e5! gives White nice chances.

12. 0-0 f7-f6!

13. e4-e5 ♗f8-e7!

with balanced play.

C2) 6. ♗f1-c4



Played by both Nimzowitsch and Botvinnik: White continues with his development unconcerned by any positional drawbacks in his position.

6...e6 was played in the early days of the line, but is now considered too passive: after 7.0-0 ♘8c6 8.d3, White is better. Therefore, Black would be wise to choose from one of the following two lines:

C21) 6. ... ♗c8-e6

This allows the creation of an ugly doubled pawn on e6 in order to increase the effectiveness of the check on d3. This was a firm favourite in the 1980's but now it is very rarely seen.

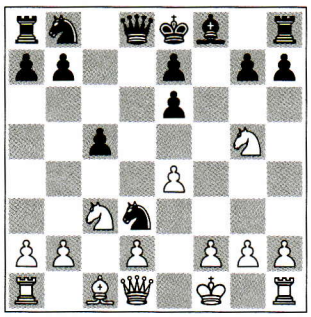
7. ♗c4xe6 ♘b4-d3+

8. ♔e1-f1

Going to e2 would permit ...♘f4+/xe6, with easy play for Black.

8. ... f7xe6

9. ♘f3-g5!



White is the first to strike: he attacks e6 with the option of developing the queen on weakened light squares on either side of the board (e2, f3, g4, b3, a4).

9. ... ♕d8-d7

The best response to Tal's 9...♕b6 appears to be 10.♕f3 c4 11.b3! (the check on f7 is pointless).

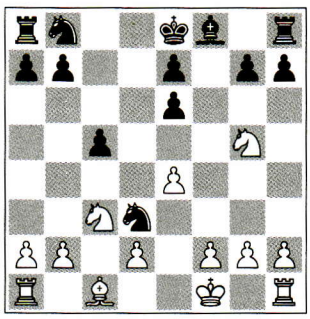
10. ♕d1-f3

The plan is 11.♕f7+ followed by 12.♘xe6+.

10. ... ♘d3-e5

11. ♕f3-h3 ♕d7-d3+!

12. ♕h3xd3 ♘e5xd3



The only differences between this and the previous diagram is that the queens have been exchanged off and it is White to move.

13. ♘g5xe6

13.♔e2 is also promising.

13. ... ♔e8-d7

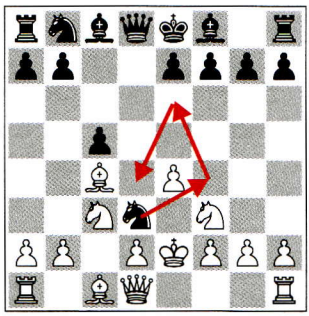
14. ♘e6-g5

Black does not appear to have achieved enough compensation for the pawn.

C22) 6. ... ♘b4-d3+

The most natural and probably strongest move.

7. ♔e1-e2!



Forcing the knight to abandon d3.

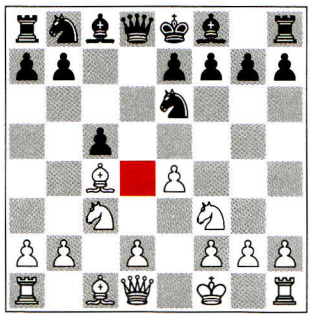
7. ... ♘d3-f4+

7...♘xc1+ 8.♖xc1 has been given a try, but with awful results: it has become clear that the two bishops do not represent enough compensation for Black's grave lack of development.

8. ♔e2-f1

Now White is ready to advance his pawn to d4 with an eye on the undefended knight on f4.

8. ... ♘f4-e6



Retreating to d3 does not make sense because of 9.♕e2, whereas 8...♗e6?! is weak as it would be answered by 9.♗b5+ and then 10.d4.

9. b2-b4!?

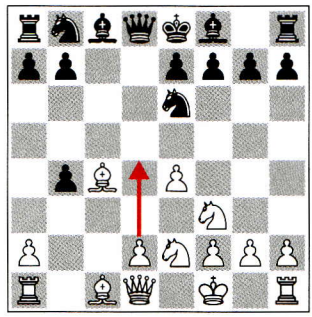
The most energetic and also probably the best: White must exploit his lead in development before the weakness on d4 starts to become a problem. For this reason he is prepared to give up a pawn so as to take control of the centre.

The old 9.♘e5 does not cause Black any serious concern after 9...g6 (*but not 9...♘d7?! as there is 10.♘xf7!*) 10.♕a4+ ♗d7 11.♘xd7 ♕xd7 12.♗xe6 fxe6.

9. ... c5xb4

Black can not only decline the pawn on offer, but indeed offer one of his own with the controversial 9...g6!? 10.bxc5 ♗g7 11.♗xe6 ♗xe6 12.d4 ♘c6 13.♗e3 ♕a5 14.♖c1, and White should be able to consolidate his centre.

10. ♘c3-e2!



This simple preparation for d2-d4 has now overtaken the old 10.♘d5 which leads to a balanced position after 10...g6! 11.♗b2 ♗g7 12.♗xg7 ♘xg7 13.♘xb4 0-0 14.h3 e5.

10. ... ♘e6-c7!

So as to play e6 and complete development.

10...g6 is doubtful: 11.♗b2 ♗g7 12.♗xe6 ♗xb2 13.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 14.♕b3+, with a clear advantage for White.

11. d2-d4 e7-e6

12. h2-h4!

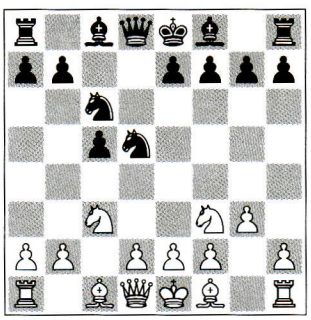
As is seen in some **MacCutcheon** lines (see the section on the **French** in Vol.

1) White takes advantage of the fact that he has not castled and advances his pawn to h5 / h6 and then develops his rook to h3 and then g3 (as many a beginner does!).
There is evident compensation for the pawn, even if it would not be prudent to call it an objective advantage. However, White's great results demonstrate that his position is easier to play.

D) 5. g2-g3

This preparation of the fianchetto of the king's bishop is the most played continuation.
This usually leads to the **Rubinstein Variation**, which is when Black retreats his knight to c7 and plays ...e7-e5, establishing a **Maroczy Bind** with reversed colours (pawns on c5 and e5, instead of on c4 and e4).
It is worth noting that this set-up is often reached by reversing the moves ♘f3 and g3, usually with the move sequence 1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♘xd5 4.g3 c5 5.♗g2 ♘c7 6.♘f3 ♘c6 etc.

5. ... ♘b8-c6



5...e6 transposes to the **Keres Variation** 5...g6 6.♗g2 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♘xd5 ♕xd5 transposes to the line in the notes for Variation B on page 117.

6. ♗f1-g2 ♘d5-c7

In the **Maroczy**, bringing the knight back to c2 is a promising sub-variation; however, here Black cannot immediately occupy the centre: *6...e5? allows 7.♘xe5 ♘xc3 8.♘xc6, and White has a distinct advantage.*

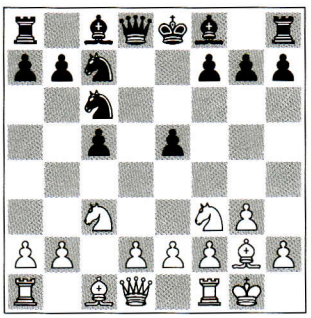
7. 0-0

The recent idea 7.♕a4!? prevents ...e7-e5: after 7...♗d7 8.♕e4 – with the idea of ♘e5 – the game is too complex for a simplistic evaluation.

7. ... e7-e5

We have now reached the position in the following diagram, which is considered to be the starting point for the **Rubinstein Variation**.

Rubinstein Variation



Black's centre is imposing but slightly overextended. White must therefore respond energetically before Black has the chance to consolidate and make the most of his space advantage.

8. d2-d3

Easily the most popular move, though it might be worth considering the paradoxical 8.♘e1!?, with the intention of ♗xc6+ followed by ♕a4 and ♘d3.

8. ... ♗f8-e7

9. ♘f3-d2

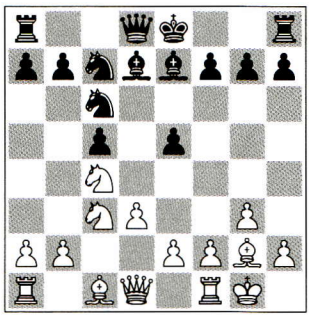
With its sights on c4: in the Maroczy with ♘c2 the ...♘d7-c5 manoeuvre is standard.

9. ... ♗c8-d7

Though not forced, this is by far and away the most played reply: Black prudently avoids doubled c-pawns, as is exactly the case in its mirror variation the Accelerated Dragon, where White often plays ♗d2.

10. ♘d2-c4

Now we have reached a critical position:



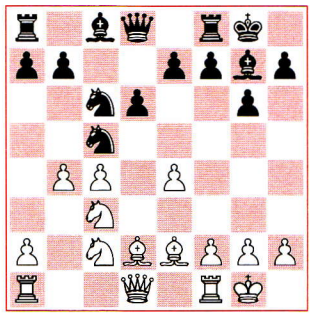
The threat is ♗xc6 and then ♘xe5. Black must decide whether to parry the threat or ignore it.

D1) 10. ... 0-0

A bold move that sacrifices a pawn in exchange for the initiative.

There is no doubt that in the reverse version of this line – 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.c4 ♗g7 6.♘c2!? ♘f6 7.♘c3 d6 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♗d2 ♘c5 – this sacrifice is optimum; indeed, with 11.b4 White encourages his opponent to accept the pawn.

However, it is the very presence of this pawn on b4 that changes everything:

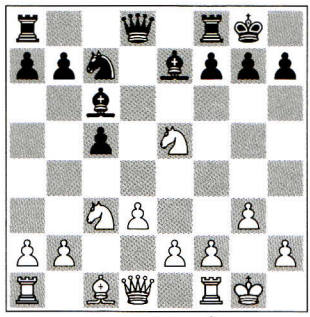


After 11...♗xc3 12.♗xc3 ♘xe4, the bishop retreats to b2 from where it menacingly controls the long diagonal. This is so uncomfortable that Black usually declines the pawn on offer and continues with 11...♘e6.

However, in the English after

11. ♗g2xc6 ♗d7xc6

12. ♘c4xe5



the pawn is still on b7 and the bishop must meekly go to e8 to avoid an exchange.

An inquisitive reader may well ask the question: why not play 10...b5 and bring the bishop back to b7? That is a nice idea, but unfortunately it does not hold up tactically: 11.♗xc6 ♗xc6 12.♘xe5 ♗b7 13.♕b3 and here the queen attacks both the b5 and f7 pawns.

Let's return to the line in question.

12. ... ♗c6-e8
13. ♗c1-e3 ♘c7-e6
14. ♕d1-b3 ♗e7-d6

Black has some compensation, but it has nonetheless lost its past popularity.

D2) 10. ... f7-f6

The most solid.

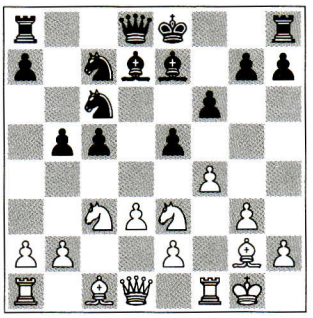
11. f2-f4

Persisting with the attack on e5 is the most thematic.

11. ... b7-b5

The immediate 11...exf4?! is dubious: after 12.♗xf4 the weakness on d6 will immediately become apparent.

12. ♘c4-e3



This is perhaps the critical position for the whole line: it is full of positional and tactical tension, which explains why players like it so much.

12. ... ♖a8-c8

12...exf4 is a valid alternative here: after 13.gxf4 (13.♘f5 and 13.♖xf4 have also been tried) 13...♖b8 14.♘ed5 ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 0-0, the game is complicated and any result is possible.

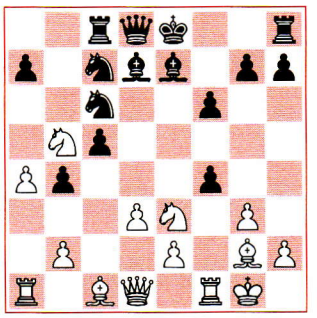
13. a2-a4

So that the knight can go to c4.

13. ... b5-b4

13...a6 maintains aligned pawns, but then the a-file is in White's hands.

14. ♘c3-b5 e5xf4

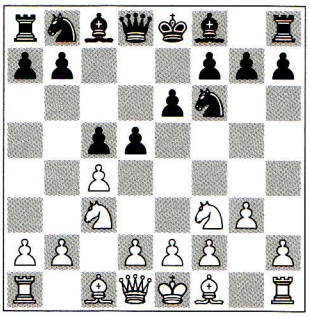


In this complex position a good six moves have been considered (15.♘xc7+, 15.♗xc6, 15.♘f5, 15.♖xf4, 15.gxf4, 15.♘c4) and we still have not made up our minds as to which is best!

A classic example of when the annotation 'unclear' is the safest bet!

Keres System

1.	c2-c4	c7-c5
2.	♘g1-f3	♘g8-f6
3.	♘b1-c3	e7-e6
4.	g2-g3	d7-d5

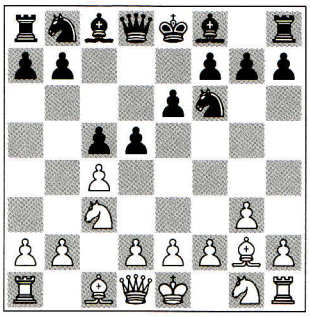


When we talk about the **Keres System**, we are referring to a set-up that is created when Black responds to White's fianchetto by playing ...e7-e6 and then ...d7-d5 and, after the usual pawn capture, he recaptures on d5 with the f6 knight.

Often the advance ...d7-d5 is made after ...♘c6 and ...♗e7, but so as to make explanation easier, we will presume that the pawn push is made on the fourth move.

It is important to stress that after the recapture on d5 by the knight and White's d2-d4, you reach positions that are classified by ECO as belonging to the **6.g3 Variation** of the **Semi-Tarrasch**, which we have already discussed in Vol. 2 of our series. However, these lines are an integral part of the **Symmetrical English**, and so it seemed appropriate to look at them in this context as well.

It is worthwhile to look at the move sequences in which White delays the move ♘f3; for example, after 1.c4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 e6, White cannot play the spontaneous 4.♗g2?! as after 4...d5!



Black has no problems, which explains Black's excellent results with this line. Black is ready to advance his pawn to d4, attacking the c3 knight, and White does not have time to play his own pawn to d4 as he would be forced to recapture with the queen.

For this reason the correct move is 4.♘f3, which introduces the lines we are discussing here.

As we have already noted, frequent transpositions are a distinguishing feature of the English. Here, for example, after 1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e6, White could play 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 and now:

- 5...♘c6 transposes to the **English Four Knights**.
- 5...♗b4 6.g3 takes us into the **Nimzo-Indian**.
- The pawn move 5...a6!? merits attention as it has recently obtained decent results; the idea is to attack the c4 pawn with ...♕c7.

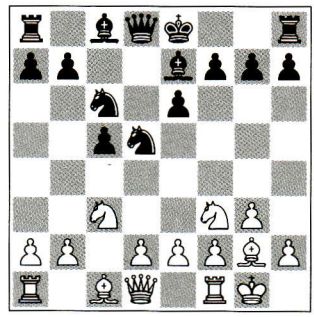
Let's return to 4.g3 d5.

5. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5

5...exd5 6.d4 transposes to the **Tarrasch** (Volume 2).

6. ♗f1-g2 ♘b8-c6
7. 0-0 ♗f8-e7

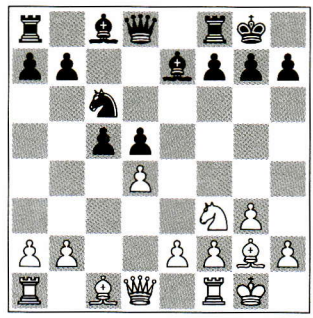
And we are now at an important crossroads:



A) 8. ♘c3xd5 e6xd5

Following 8...♕xd5 9.d3 0-0 10.♗e3, White is a little better.

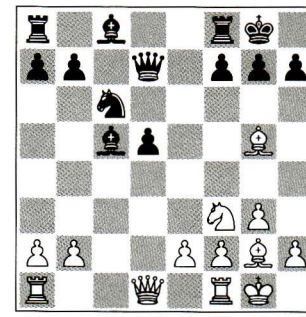
9. d2-d4 0-0



Now we are dealing with the **Tarrasch Defence** minus knights on c3 and f6.

We would like to quote from the relevant section on the **Semi-Tarrasch** (a common way of reaching this position) in Volume 2:

'... it is not so clear who stands better, but performance results favour Black. After 10.dxc5 ♗xc5 11.♗g5, theory states that Black maintains equality with the strange move 11...♕d7!'



The idea behind this odd queen move, which blocks the path of the c8 bishop, is to continue with ...h6, ...♖d8 and ...♕e7 and development of the bishop, with an acceptable position.

B) 8. d2-d4 0-0
9. e2-e4

Also here we are in a **Semi-Tarrasch** line, and again we will quote from our second volume:

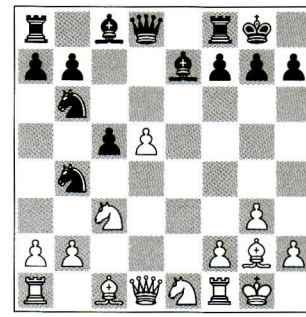
9. ... ♘d5-b6

The most combative move; however, both 9...♘db4!? and 9...♘xc3 are possible.

10. d4-d5

10.dxc5 has some venom, yet it is not the perfect choice if you are playing for a win.

10. ... e6xd5
11. e4xd5 ♘c6-b4
12. ♘f3-e1!



12.	...	♗e7-f6
13.	♗c1-e3	♗f6xc3
14.	b2xc3	♘b4xd5
15.	♗e3xc5	♖f8-e8
16.	♕d1-d4	

and White is slightly better off.'

Rukavina,Josip
Djuric,Stefan
Basel open 2006 (6)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.d4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 g6 7.e3 ♗g7 8.♗b5+ ♘d7 9.a4 0-0 10.♗a3 b6 11.0-0 ♕c7 12.a5 ♘f6 13.♖c1 ♗b7 14.a6 ♗c6 15.c4 ♖ad8 16.♗xc6 ♕xc6 17.♕b3 ♘e4 18.♖fd1 e6 19.♖d3 ♕c8 20.♕a4 e5 21.d5 ♘xf2 22.♔xf2 e4 23.♖d2 exf3 24.d6 ♕g4 25.gxf3 ♕h4+ 26.♔g1 ♕g5+ 27.♔f2 ♖fe8 28.♖d3 ♗e5 29.♖h1 ♗xd6 30.♗b2 ♗f4 31.e4 ♔f8 32.♖d5 ♗e3+ 33.♔f1 ♕h4 34.♕c2 ♕h3+ 35.♕g2 ♕c8 36.♕e2 ♗d4 37.♗xd4 cxd4 38.♕d3 ♖xd5 39.cxd5 ♕c1+ 40.♔g2 ♕g5+ 41.♔h3 ♕f4 42.♔g2 ♖c8 43.♖f1 ♕f6 44.f4 ♖c3 45.e5 ♕h4 46.♕xd4 ♕h3+ 47.♔g1 ♖c2 48.♕b4+ ♔g7 0-1

Navara,David
Naiditsch,Arkady
Wijk aan Zee II 2006 (5)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b4 6.♗c4 ♘d3+ 7.♔e2 ♘f4+ 8.♔f1 ♘e6 9.b4 g6 10.bxc5 ♗g7 11.♗xe6 ♗xe6 12.d4 ♗g4 13.♖b1 ♘c6 14.♖xb7 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♕xd4 16.♗b2 ♕c4+ 17.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 18.♔xe2 0-0-0 19.♘d5 ♔xb7 20.♗xg7 ♖hg8 21.♖b1+ ♔c8 22.♗c3 ♖d7 23.♖b3 f5 24.f3 fxe4 25.fxe4 ♖b7 26.♖a3 ♔d7 27.♖a6 ♖c8 28.♔d3 ♖b1 29.♔c4 ♖g1 30.e5 e6 31.♘b4 ♖xg2 32.h3 ♖g3 33.♘xc6 ♖xc6 34.♖xa7+ ♖c7 35.♖a6 ♖c6 36.♖a7+ ♖c7 37.♖a6 ♖c6 ½-½

Filippov,Valery
Van Wely,Loek
Tripoli Wch 2004 (2)

1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b4 6.♗c4 ♘d3+ 7.♔e2 ♘f4+ 8.♔f1 ♘e6 9.b4 cxb4 10.♘e2 ♘c7 11.d4 e6 12.h4 ♘d7 13.h5 h6 14.♗f4 ♘b6 15.♗d3 ♗d7 16.♘e5 ♗a4 17.♕d2 ♗e7 18.♖h3 ♘b5 19.♖g3 ♘xd4 20.♖xg7 ♖f8 21.♖c1 ♗f6 22.♖g3 ♘xe2 23.♕xe2 ♗xe5 24.♗xe5 ♖c8 25.♖xc8 ♘xc8 26.♗g7 ♕a5 27.♗xf8 ♔xf8 28.♕d2 ♘e7 29.♕xh6+ ♔e8 30.♕g5 ♕b6 31.h6 ♘g6 32.h7 ♕d4 33.♔g1 1-0

Kasparov,Garry
Kortchnoi,Viktor
Skelleftea 1989 (1)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.♘f3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b4 6.♗b5+ ♘8c6 7.d4 cxd4 8.a3 dxc3 9.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10.axb4 cxb2 11.♗xb2 f6 12.e5 ♗g4 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♘d4 fxe5 15.♘xc6+ ♔c7 16.♘xe5 ♗h5 17.0-0 ♗e8 18.♖fc1+ ♔b7 19.♘c4 e5 20.♗xe5 h5 21.♘a5+ ♔b6 22.♗c7+ ♔a6 23.♘c6+ 1-0

Tkachiev,Vladislav
Palac,Mladen
Rabac tt 2003 (6)

1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b4 6.♗b5+ ♘8c6 7.d4 cxd4 8.a3 ♗d7 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4

10.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 11.axb4 e6 12.♗e3 ♖d8 13.0-0 ♗xb4 14.♗xd4 ♕xd4 15.♕a4+ ♔e7 16.♘b5 ♕xe4 17.♖fe1 ♕xe1+ 18.♖xe1 ♗xe1 19.♕a3+ ♔f6 20.♕f3+ ♔e7 21.♕a3+ ♔f6 22.♘d6 h5 23.h4 ♗d2 24.♕f3+ ♔g6 25.♘c4 f6 26.♕a3 ♔f7 27.♕xa7 ♖d7 28.♘xd2 ♖xd2 29.♕xb7+ ♔g8 30.♕e4 ♔f7 ½-½

Aronian,Levon
Smirnov,Pavel
Tripoli Wch 2004 (3)

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 ♘c7 7.0-0 e5 8.d3 ♗e7 9.♘d2 ♗d7 10.♘c4 f6 11.f4 b5 12.♘e3 ♖c8 13.a4 b4 14.♘b5 exf4 15.♗xc6 fxe3 16.♗e4 ♘xb5 17.axb5 ♗xb5 18.♖xa7 0-0 19.♗xe3 ♔h8 20.♕a1 ♗d6 21.♖f5 ♗d7 22.♕f1 ♕e8 23.♖d5 f5 24.♕h3 fxe4 25.♕xd7 ♕xd7 26.♖xd7 exd3 27.exd3 ♖ce8 28.♗g5 ♗e5 29.♗e7 ♖xe7 30.♖xe7 ♗xb2 31.♖f7 ♖e8 32.♖fd7 ♗d4+ 33.♔g2 b3 34.♖d8 ♖g8 35.♖5d7 b2 36.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 37.♖b7 ♗c3 38.♖b3 ♔f7 39.♔f3 ♔f6 40.♔e2 ♔f5 41.h3 g5 42.♔d1 g4 43.hxg4+ ♔xg4 44.♔c2 ♗d4 45.♖b6 h5 46.♖g6+ ♔f5 47.♖g8 ♔e5 ½-½

Pantsulaia,Levan
Timofeev,Artyom
Rethymnon tt 2003 (3)

1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗g2 ♘c6 6.0-0 e5 7.♘c3 ♘c7 8.d3 ♗e7 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♖c1 ♖b8 11.a3 b6 12.b4 cxb4 13.axb4 ♘xb4 14.♘xe5 ♗b7 15.♗xb7 ♖xb7 16.♕b3 a5 17.♕c4 b5 18.♕e4 ♕a8 19.♕g4 ♕a6 20.♘d7 ♖d8 21.♘c5 ♗xc5 22.♗xc5 ♘bd5 23.♘xd5 ♘xd5 24.♗d4 ♘f6 25.♕f3 ♘e8 26.♖c6 ♕a8 27.♖fc1 b4 28.♕g4 a4 29.♗e5 ♕a5 30.♖1c5 ♕a7 31.♖c8 ♖bd7 32.♖5c7 ♖xc8 33.♖xc8 f5 1-0

Gashimov,Vugar
Xu Jun
Calvia ol 2004 (12)

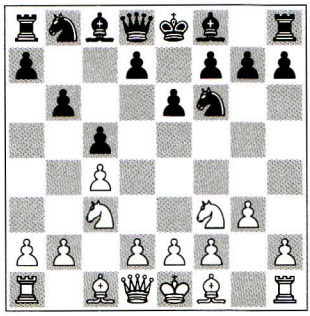
1.c4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗g2 ♘c7 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 e5 8.d3 ♗e7 9.♘d2 ♗d7 10.♘c4 0-0 11.♗xc6 ♗xc6 12.♘xe5 ♗e8 13.♗e3 ♘e6 14.♕b3 ♗f6 15.f4 ♗xe5 16.fxe5 ♗c6 17.♕c4 ♕c7 18.♖f5 g6 19.♕g4 ♘d4 20.♗xd4 cxd4 21.♘e4 ♗xe4 22.dxe4 ♖ae8 23.♖d1 ♖xe5 24.♕f4 gxf5 25.♕g5+ ♔h8 26.♕f6+ ♔g8 27.♕g5+ ♔h8 28.♕f6+ ♔g8 29.♕g5+ ♔h8 30.♕f6+ ½-½

Van Wely,Loek
Safarli,Eltaj
Budva Ech 2009 (8)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.g3 e6 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♗g2 d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.d4 0-0 9.♘xd5 exd5 10.dxc5 ♗xc5 11.♗g5 ♕d7 12.♘e1 ♖e8 13.♘d3 ♗b6 14.♗d2 ♕d6 15.♘f4 ♗g4 16.h3 ♗f5 17.♗xd5 ♗xh3 18.♗c3 ♕h6 19.♕b3 ♖e7 20.♖fd1 ♖ae8 21.♕c4 ♗f5 22.♔g2 ♗e4+ 23.f3 ♗g6 24.e4 ♕g5 25.♖h1 ♘e5 26.♕e2 ♘d7 27.♕b5 ♘c5 28.♖ae1 ♗c7 29.♖h4 ♗xf4 30.♖xf4 ♘e6 31.♖g4 ♕h6 32.♗xe6 ♖xe6 33.♖h4 a6 1-0

Hedgehog System

1.	**c2-c4**	**c7-c5**
2.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘g8-f6**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**e7-e6**
4.	**g2-g3**	**b7-b6**



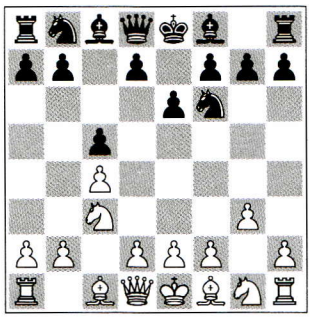
This is the most common move sequence for creating the **Hedgehog** formation, but it is important to remember that it is not the only way.

Sometimes White delays the development of the knight to c3 and plays 3.g3; in this case Black must immediately play 3...b6 if he wishes to establish this set-up. Indeed, as we explained on page 102 (2.g3 Variation), 3...e6 4.♗g2 b6?! is not possible for tactical reasons.

At this point, if Black continues with ...e6 you transpose to the Hedgehog as given above, but White's early kingside fianchetto gives Black the interesting extra option of ...g6, the ever more popular **Double Fianchetto**, which will be discussed in the next section.

Responding to 3.♘c3 with 3...b6 has the drawback that White can play 4.d4!, and after 4...cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♗b7 6.f3!, he can occupy the centre without having to develop his bishop to g2. This is by no means the end of the world, and Black's position remains playable. However, Black will usually prefer to play 3...e6 first and wait for White to fianchetto.

It is important to stress that White cannot stop Black establishing the Hedgehog formation with the move sequence 1.c4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3, as Black will play 3...e6!

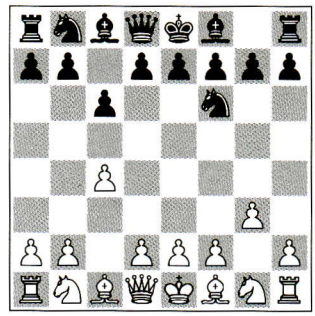


and as before, the natural-looking 4.♗g2?! is not good due to 4...d5!. White must therefore continue with 4.♘f3 in order to support the d2-d4 advance, and then Black can fianchetto and create the Hedgehog set-up.

However, as noted before, White does have the means to prevent the Hedgehog, namely 2.g3!?. After 2...♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.♘f3, a queenside fianchetto is no longer on as there is 5.♘e5.

But a diehard Hedgehog fan is not put off so easily. The battle now goes back to an 'improvement' on the first move! By playing 1...♘f6! instead of 1...c5, Black waits for White to play 2.♘c3 or 2.♘f3 before playing ...c7-c5, after which White cannot thwart Black's plan to establish the Hedgehog formation.

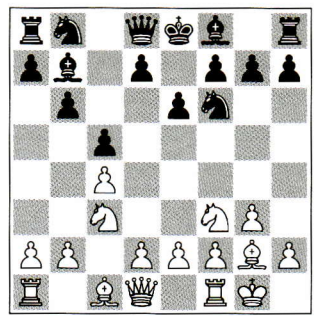
It is true that there is nothing to prevent White from playing 2.g3, but in that event Black can respond with 2...c6!



followed by 3...d5, which leads into a **Réti** line that is considered to be satisfactory for Black.

Now that we have looked at some of these move sequence subtleties, we can return to the diagram position at the beginning of this section (after 4...b6).

5. ♗f1-g2 ♗c8-b7
6. 0-0



Black now has two options that resist easy classification, as one will often transpose to the other.

In reality there is the third option of 6...d6, but as this always leads into one of these two lines it does not merit to be examined as an individual variation.

The natural developing move 6...♘c6 is now a move of the past: nowadays most players believe that in the Hedgehog the knight is more flexibly placed on d7 than on c6. However, this does not mean that 6...♘c6 is by any means a bad move: after 7.e4 d6 8.d4 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♕d7, Black's position is reasonable.

A) 6. ... a7-a6

Black delays the development of the bishop so as to take the sting out of several lines that White has at his disposal. However, as always, there is a price to pay.

7. ♖f1-e1!

This is stronger here than in the line that follows.

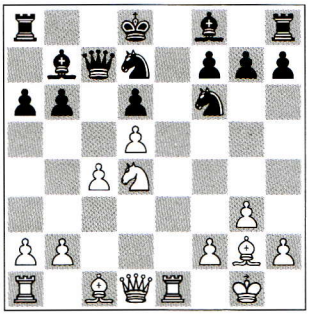
In reply to the normal 7.d4 there is 7...cxd4 8.♕xd4 d6 9.♗g5 (one of many possibilities) 9...♘bd7 (unlike the variation in which ...♗e7 is played instead of ...♘bd7, White does not have the promising exchange 10.♗xf6!?) 10.♘d2!? ♗xg2 11.♔xg2 ♗e7 12.♘de4 ♕c7 13.♖fd1 0-0! and by sacrificing the d6 pawn, Black gets a pleasant game: note that 14.♘xd6 is hazardous due to 14...♖ad8!.

7. ... d7-d6
8. e2-e4

This is the idea: before playing d2-d4, White closes the b7 bishop's diagonal so as to recapture on d4 with the knight.

8. ... ♗f8-e7

While after 8...♘bd7 the sacrifice may not be objectively winning, it is tricky to play against over the board: 9.d4 cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♕c7 (*it is too late for 10...♗e7?, which will be met by 11.e5*) 11.♘d5!? (though 11.♗e3 is more prudent it is still good: 11...♗e7 12.f4) 11...exd5 12.exd5+ ♔d8.



White has only got one pawn for the piece, but one characteristic of Black's position is heavily in White's favour: the black king is stuck in the centre of the board, which gives White a lasting initiative.

For example: 13.♘c6+ (13.♗f4!?) 13...♗xc6 14.dxc6 ♘c5 15.b4 ♘e6 16.c5. White's performance with this position is 70%, and even the materially minded computer programs give White an advantage. This should be more than enough to discourage Black from trying this line.

9. d2-d4 c5xd4

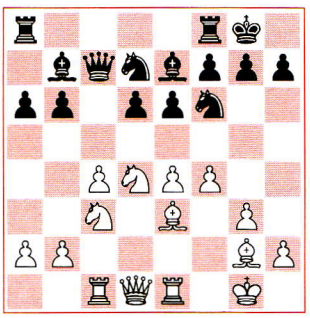
10. ♘f3xd4 ♕d8-c7

With this move Black takes care of the e4-e5 threat.

11. ♗c1-e3 0-0

12. ♖a1-c1 ♘b8-d7

13. f2-f4



A position that is often seen; compared to the various classic Hedgehog positions, White has more offensive options and he is ready to make pawn advances to f5 or g5.

13. ... ♖f8-e8

This move has been borrowed from the Sicilian. It anticipates the opening of the e-file. In addition it makes the move ...♘f8 possible, which could prove to be a useful defensive measure.

14. g3-g4!?

Threatening to win the knight with 15.g5.

After the immediate 14.f5, Black can successfully defend himself with 14...♗d8! 15.fxe6 fxe6 16.♗h3 ♘f8.

The value of the sortie 14.♘d5 is less clear after 14...exd5 15.cxd5 ♕b8 16.♘c6 ♗xc6 17.dxc6 ♘c5 18.c7 ♕xc7 19.e5.

One promising line is 14.♗f2!? (with the idea of playing e4-e5) 14...♗f8! 15.♕e2 (now Black can reply to 15.e5 with the capture on g2) 15...h5!, with a balanced game.

14. ... g7-g6

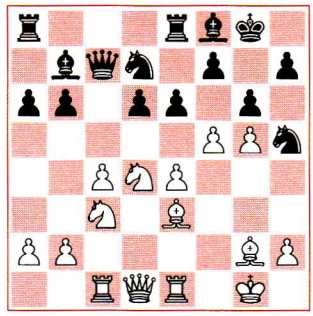
A typical move with this defensive formation: Black parries the threat of 15.g5 (15...♘h5 is now possible) without concern for weakening his king's protection.

15. g4-g5 ♘f6-h5

16. f4-f5!?

With this move White launches what appears to be a promising attack. However, appearances are deceptive – as is so often the case with the Hedgehog – and the onslaught is not as dangerous as it looks.

16. ... ♗e7-f8!

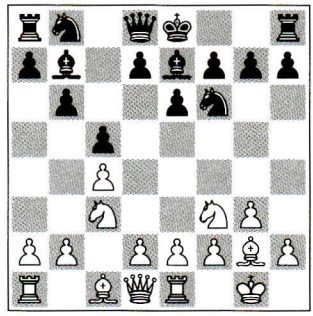


Black's king is sufficiently protected and his possession of the e5-square gives him optimum chances for counterplay.

B) 6. ... ♗f8-e7

This natural move remains the most popular. Now White can directly play d2-d4, or do so at a more favourable moment.

B1) 7. ♖f1-e1



As we pointed out earlier, the idea is to play e2-e4 first and only then make a subsequent d2-d4 advance.

Now both the moves 7...d6 and 7...a6 transpose to Variation A.

The alternative 7...0-0 looks a little unnatural, but it is nonetheless playable: 8.e4 d6 9.d4 cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♕c8!.

B11) 7. ... d7-d5

Stopping e2-e4.

8. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5

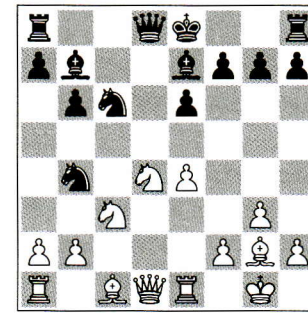
8...exd5 is less fluid but still feasible; the rigid pawn structure is compensated for by the excellent position of the rook on e1. After 9.d4 0-0, you are in a position that is classified as part of the **Queen's Indian** (ECO E17).

9. e2-e4 ♘d5-b4

9...♘xc3 10.bxc3 is not sufficient to achieve equality.

10. d2-d4 c5xd4

11. ♘f3xd4 ♘b8-c6



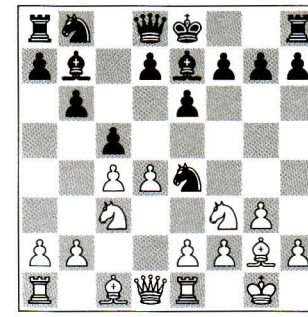
12. ♘d4xc6

And with some effort Black maintains the equilibrium after **12...♕xd1! 13.♖xd1 ♗xc6! 14.a3 ♘c2!**.

B12) 7. ... ♘f6-e4

Top players now feel this move to be the most reliable. Exchanges take off the pressure and minimize the benefits of White's space advantage.

8. d2-d4!?



This recent move is emblematic of the modern dynamic approach to the game; in the not too distant past, it would have been considered strategic heresy to allow the c-pawns to be doubled in this fashion. Now we believe that White receives sufficient compensation.

The normal 8.♘xe4 ♗xe4 9.d3 ♗b7 10.e4 0-0 11.d4 cxd4 12.♘xd4 d6 gives Black a version of the Hedgehog without knights on c3 and f6. This should be beneficial to Black – at least in theory.

8. ... ♘e4xc3

Preventing the intended d4-d5 advance.

9. b2xc3 ♗b7-e4

Before White closes in the bishop with d4-d5.

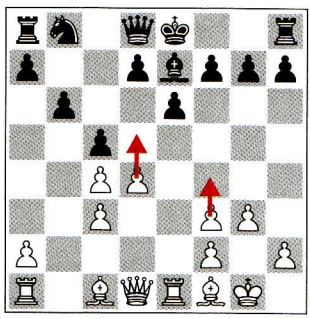
10. ♗g2-f1!

Despite its odd appearance, this move is strong; White wants to play ♘d2 and take possession of the centre without allowing Black to exchange bishops.

10. ... ♗e4xf3

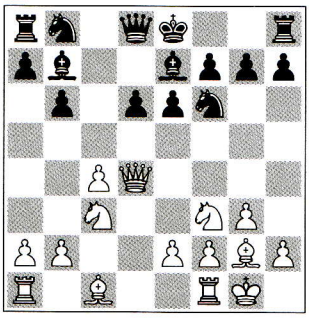
Thwarting the above plan and creating doubled pawns.

11. e2xf3



This is a typical position in contemporary chess: even though White's pawn structure has been severely compromised and will be difficult to defend, his performance has been optimum: after **11...♘c6 12.d5 ♘a5 13.f4**, the quality of the kingside initiative compensates for the weak pawn structure.

B2) 7. d2-d4 c5xd4
8. ♕d1xd4! d7-d6



As noted previously, it is now pretty much taken for granted that the best place for the b8 knight is on d7: after 8...♘c6 9.♕f4 0-0 (9...♕b8 10.♘b5!) 10.♖d1 ♕b8 11.b3! ♖d8 12.♗b2 ♕xf4 13.gxf4, White's advantage seems to be minimal, but there must be hidden strengths in the position, as White's excellent performance with this line attests.

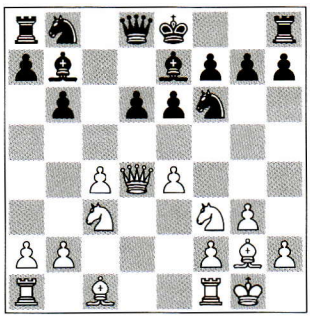
The immediate 8...a6 is clearly dubious: 9.♗e3! ♗c5 10.♕d3 ♗xe3 11.♕xe3 and White is obviously better.

The diagram position makes it easy to understand the name of this formation: the pawns on the sixth rank (and later on often on a6 and g6 as well) act like the defensive spines of a hedgehog, controlling all of Black's centre squares, which are difficult to attack. The only pawn which can become a possible target is the one on d6, but usually only

after quite a bit of manoeuvring, which leaves Black with enough time to find adequate counterplay.
Like a boxer, Black waits patiently for White to overstep the mark and perhaps swing a little wildly, leaving himself vulnerable to a counterpunch... a surprisingly common phenomenon, especially at lower levels of play, where players often underestimate Black's resources.

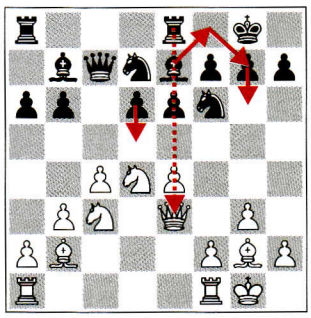
At this stage White has four main plans:

B21) 9. e2-e4



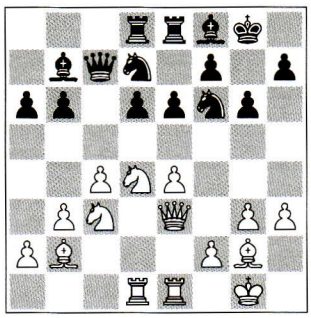
This introduces a line that is sometimes known as the **Uhlmann Variation**. This association is merited as the East German grandmaster came up with the idea and played it with devotion from the 1970's on.
The e2-e4 advance prepares the manoeuvre ♕e3/♘d4, so as to exploit White's space advantage without permitting the g2 bishop to be exchanged off.

9.	**...**	**0-0**
10.	**♕d4-e3**	**a7-a6**
11.	**♘f3-d4**	**♕d8-c7**
12.	**b2-b3**	**♘b8-d7**
13.	**♗c1-b2**	**♖f8-e8**



A typical **Hedgehog** move: on e8 the rook waits for a possible opening of the e-file following Black's thematic advance ...d6-d5. Naturally, White seeks to prevent this, and then to begin a prudent initiative on the kingside.

14.	**♖f1-e1**	**♗e7-f8**
15.	**h2-h3**	**♖a8-d8**
16.	**♖a1-d1**	**g7-g6**



Another characteristic move: the weakening of h6 is not serious, and Black is ready to activate the bishop on g7, creating a position that is difficult to attack. The resulting game is strategically rich, and thus – more than usual – the stronger player is more likely to win.

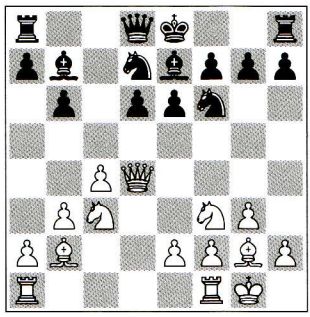
B22) 9. b2-b3

With the possibility of developing the bishop on b2 or otherwise a3 so as to apply pressure to the d6 pawn.

9. ... ♘b8-d7

With the option of later playing ...♘c5: if Black plays 9...a6 immediately, after 10.♗a3, the knight move ...♘bd7 can no longer be played.

10. ♗c1-b2



Now 10.♗a3 ♘c5 tends to transpose to Variation B242 (page 136) after 11.♖fd1.

10.♘b5!? had a period of comparative popularity in the 1990's. Though it was successful at first, the complications that arise after 10...♘c5 (10...d5 is also sufficient to achieve equality) 11.♖d1 ♘fe4! 12.♕xg7! ♗f6 13.♕h6 ♗xa1 14.♘g5 do not seem to offer that much if Black plays 14...♗e5!.

10. ... a7-a6

11. e2-e4

11.♖fd1 transposes to B24.

11. ... 0-0

12. ♕d4-e3!? ♕d8-c7

13. ♘f3-d4

with a transposition into the 9.e4 line (page 134).

B23) 9. ♗c1-g5 a7-a6

Stopping 10.♘b5.

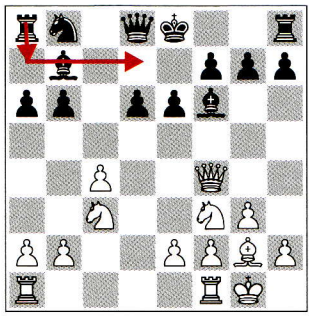
10. ♗g5xf6!?

White is prepared to concede the dark-squared bishop so that he can apply pressure to the d6 pawn.

10. ... ♗e7xf6

10...gxf6?! is highly dubious: it is true that in some Sicilian lines such as the Richter-Rauzer (Volume 1), it is considered feasible and is played, but in those positions Black has good queenside counterplay and the chance to open up the game, hoping to make the most of the bishop pair. However, the English is characterized by manoeuvring with the focus on structural weaknesses, and in this context it is not uncommon for the knights to be more effective than bishops.

11. ♕d4-f4



11. ... ♗b7xf3!

The results at hand show this to be the strongest move: Black now concedes one of his bishops so that he can execute the manoeuvre ...♖a8-a7-d7.

It should be noted that after the more natural 11...0-0 12.♖fd1 ♗e7 13.♘e4 Black cannot avoid the exchange of the b7 bishop: 13...♗xe4 14.♕xe4 ♖a7 15.♘d4, and White has an edge.

12. ♗g2xf3

The recapture 12.♕xf3 produces a balanced game after 12...♖a7 13.♖fd1 0-0 14.♖ac1 ♖d7.

12. ... ♖a8-a7

13. ♖f1-d1 ♗f6-e5

14. ♕f4-d2 0-0

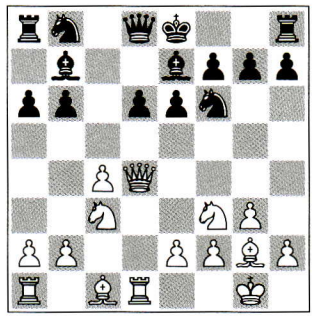
15. ♖a1-c1 ♕d8-c7

and neither side has the advantage.

B24) 9. ♖f1-d1

The most flexible move. The rook is well placed on d1, and now White has the option of developing the bishop to b2, a3 or g5, of playing e4 or executing the knight manoeuvre ♘f3-g5-e4.

9. ... a7-a6

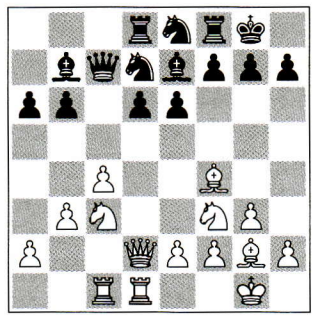


Preventing the annoying 10.♘b5.

B241) 10. ♗c1-g5 ♘b8-d7
11. ♕d4-d2

11.♗xf6 ♘xf6 12.♘a4 ♖b8! does not give White anything special.

11. ... 0-0
12. ♗g5-f4 ♘f6-e8
13. ♖a1-c1 ♕d8-c7
14. b2-b3 ♖a8-d8



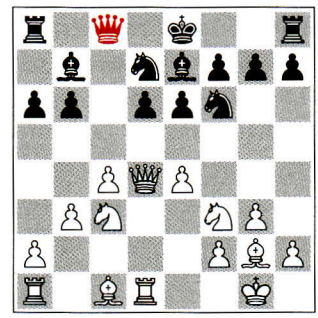
Black's position looks passive, but White will have difficulty breaking down his defensive pawn barrier.

B242) 10. b2-b3 ♘b8-d7
11. e2-e4

White postpones the decision about where to put the bishop. There is the idea of playing ♗a3 and after the forced ...♘c5 to continue with e4-e5, so as to start breaking up Black's pawn wall.

11.♗b2 0-0 12.e4 transposes to Variation B21.

11. ... ♕d8-c8!



This unnatural-looking move is a subtle idea from the 1980's.

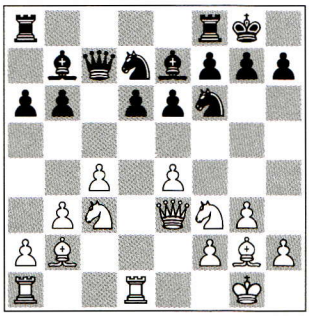
The motive is this: after the obvious 11...♕c7 Black will have to defend the slightly inferior endgame position that arises after 12.♗a3 ♘c5 13.e5 dxe5 14.♕xe5 ♖c8 15.♕xc7 ♖xc7 16.♗c1! 0-0 17.♗f4.

12. ♗c1-b2

Now 12.♗a3 is less effective: 12...♘c5 13.e5 ♗xf3! (now this is OK) 14.♗xf3 (if the queen were on c7 there would be the intermediate move 14.exd6!) 14...dxe5 15.♕xe5 ♘cd7!. Simultaneously attacking the queen and the bishop on a3. After 16.♖xd7 ♘xd7,

White will have to struggle to maintain equality.

12. ... 0-0
13. ♕d4-e3 ♕c8-c7



Having dealt with the threat, the black queen now returns to her natural square.

Compared to the **Uhlmann Variation**, Black is down a tempo (...♕c8-c7), but this does not seem to be so important and Black has adequate resources at his disposal.

B243) 10. ♘f3-g5

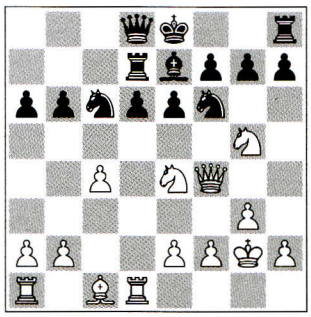
The beginning of a straightforward plan: White intends to exchange his bishop and then put his knight on e4 to attack d6.

10. ... ♗b7xg2
11. ♔g1xg2 ♘b8-c6!?

And for once the knight does not develop to d7.

11...0-0 is a playable but risky option: after 12.♘ce4 ♖a7! 13.♘xf6+ (*13.♘xd6? ♖d7*) 13...♗xf6 14.♕g4 (*needless to say, 14.♕xd6?? is not a wise idea as there is 14...♖d7*) 14...♗e7 15.h4, and White has an unpleasant initiative.

12. ♕d4-f4 ♖a8-a7
13. ♘c3-e4 ♖a7-d7



Black successfully defends himself: the tactical motif 14.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 15.♘xh7 comes to nothing after 15...♖xh7 16.♕e4 (forking the two undefended pieces) 16...♖h5 17.♕xc6 ♖c5, with good compensation for the pawn.

Cyborowski,Lukasz
Laznicka,Viktor
Legnica 2004 (6)
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘c3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.♗g2 ♗b7 6.0-0 a6 7.♖e1 d6 8.e4 ♗e7 9.d4 cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♕c7 11.♗e3 0-0 12.♖c1 ♘bd7 13.f4 ♖fe8 14.g4 ♘c5 15.♗f2 g6 16.b4 ♖ad8 17.♕f3 ♘cd7 18.♘d5 exd5 19.cxd5 ♕b8 20.♘c6 ♕a8 21.e5 dxe5 22.fxe5 ♘xd5 23.e6 fxe6 24.♖xe6 ♘f8 25.♘xd8 ♕xd8 26.♖e5 ♗c5 27.bxc5 ♖xe5 28.c6 ♗c8 29.♖d1 ♗e6 30.♗g3 ♖g5 31.♗h4 ♔g7 32.c7 ♕xc7 33.♗xg5 1-0

Gurevich,Mikhail
Adams,Michael
France tt 2006 (9)
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.g3 b6 5.♗g2 ♗b7 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.♖e1 d5 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.e4 ♘b4 10.d4 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♘8c6 12.♘xc6 ♕xd1 13.♖xd1 ♗xc6 14.♗f4 g5 15.♗d6

♖d8 16.e5 ♗xd6 17.exd6 ♗xg2 18.♔xg2 f5 19.♖ac1 ♔d7 20.♘b5 ♖c8 21.♖c7+ ♖xc7 22.dxc7+ ♘d5 23.♘xa7 ♔xc7 24.♘b5+ ♔d7 25.♘d4 ♖a8 26.a3 ♖a5 27.♘f3 g4 28.♘e5+ ♔e8 29.♘c4 ♖c5 30.b3 ♔e7 31.a4 ½-½

Topalov,Veselin
Adams,Michael

San Luis Wch 2005 (4)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.g3 b6 5.♗g2 ♗b7 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.♖e1 ♘e4 8.d4 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗e4 10.♗f1 d6 11.h4 ♘d7 12.d5 0-0 13.a4 h6 14.♗h3 exd5 15.cxd5 ♗f6 16.♖a3 b5 17.axb5 ♘b6 18.c4 ♗xf3 19.♖xf3 ♘xc4 20.♕a4 ♘e5 21.♖a3 ♖e8 22.h5 ♖e7 23.♗f4 ♖b8 24.♗f5 ♕e8 25.♗c2 ♕d7 26.♕e4 ♘g6 27.♕d3 c4 28.♕xc4 ♘xf4 29.♕xf4 ♖e5 30.♕f3 ♕h3 31.♖xa7 ♖xh5 32.e3 ♕h2+ 33.♔f1 ♕h3+ 34.♔e2 ♖e5 35.♖c7 ♖c8 36.♗f5 ♖xf5 37.♖xc8+ ♔h7 38.♖h1 1-0

Smyslov,Vasily
Benko,Pal

Szolnok 1975 (11)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2 ♗b7 5.0-0 e6 6.♘c3 ♗e7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 ♘c6 9.♕f4 0-0 10.♖d1 ♕b8 11.♕xb8 ♖axb8 12.♗f4 ♖bc8 13.e4 ♖fd8 14.e5 ♘e8 15.♘b5 ♗a8 16.b3 h6 17.h4 ♔f8 18.♖ac1 ♗c5 19.♘e1 a6 20.♘d6 ♘xd6 21.exd6 e5 22.♗e3 ♘d4 23.♗xd4 exd4 24.♗xa8 ♖xa8 25.♘c2 ♖ac8 26.♘xd4 ♗xd6 27.♖d3 ♗c5 28.♖cd1 ♗xd4 29.♖xd4 ♔e7 30.♖e4+ ♔f8 31.♔g2 ♖c5 32.b4 ♖c6 33.a4 ♖e6 34.♖ed4 ♔e7 35.♔f3 ♖f6+ 36.♔e3 ♖e6+ 37.♔d3 ♖c8 38.♖d5 ♖c7 39.h5 ♖ec6 40.♖c1 ♖d6 41.♖xd6 ♔xd6 42.♔d4 ♖c8 43.♖e1 g6 44.♖h1 g5 45.♖e1 g4 46.♖a1 ♔c7 47.a5 ♖b8 48.b5 axb5 49.cxb5 bxa5 50.♖xa5 ♖b6 51.♖a7+ ♔c8 52.♔c5 ♖f6 53.♖a4 ♖xf2 54.♖xg4 ♔c7 55.b6+ ♔b7 56.♖f4 ♖c2+ 57.♔d6 ♔xb6 58.♔xd7 ♖h2 59.g4 ♖h4 60.♖f6+ ♔c5 61.♖xh6 ♖xg4 62.♖f6 ♖e4 63.h6 ♔d4 64.h7 ♖h4 65.♖xf7 ♔e5 66.♔e7 ♖h1 67.♔f8 ♔e6 68.♔g8 1-0

Uhlmann,Wolfgang
Ribli,Zoltan

Manila izt 1976 (2)

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.♗g2 ♗b7 6.d4 cxd4 7.♕xd4 d6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.e4 0-0 10.♕e3 a6 11.♘d4 ♕c7 12.b3 ♘bd7 13.♗b2 ♖fe8 14.♖ac1 ♖ac8 15.h3 ♕b8 16.g4 h6 17.f4 ♗f8 18.♔h1 ♗a8 19.♖ce1 ♖c5 20.♕e2 ♘h7 21.♖c1 ♘df6 22.♘c2 ♖cc8 23.a3 ♘d7 24.♘e3 ♘hf6 25.b4 ♗c6 26.g5 hxg5 27.fxg5 ♘h7 28.♕f2 ♘e5 29.♘g4 ♘xg5 30.♘xe5 dxe5 31.h4 ♘h7 32.♕xf7+ ♔h8 33.♘e2 ♗e7 34.♘f4 ♘f6 35.♘g6+ ♔h7 36.♘xe7 ♖xe7 37.♕xe7 ♘xe4 38.♖f7 ♖g8 39.♕c7 ♕e8 40.♗xe5 1-0

Kasparov,Garry
Adams,Michael

Moscow tt 2004 (4)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.g3 b6 5.♗g2 ♗b7 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 d6 9.♗g5 a6 10.♗xf6 ♗xf6 11.♕f4 0-0 12.♖fd1 ♗e7 13.♘e4 ♗xe4 14.♕xe4 ♖a7 15.♘d4 ♖c7 16.b3 ♖c5 17.a4 ♕c7 18.♕b1 ♘d7

19.e3 ♕c8 20.♖a2 ♘f6 21.♖c2 a5 22.♖dd2 ♖d8 23.♘b5 g6 24.♕d1 ♘e8 25.♗f3 ♕d7 26.♖d3 ♘c7 27.♖cd2 ♘xb5 28.axb5 ♗f8 29.♗c6 ♕e7 30.♖d4 ♕f6 31.♔g2 h5 32.h3 ♖c8 33.♖2d3 ♖c7 34.♕f3 ♖f5 35.♖f4 ♖xf4 36.exf4 ♖a7 37.♕e3 ♕d8 38.c5 bxc5 39.♕xc5 ♕b8 40.♕e3 a4 41.b6 ♖a6 42.bxa4 ♖xb6 43.♗b5 d5 44.f5 exf5 45.♖xd5 ♖d6 ½-½

Lazarev,Vladimir
Landa,Konstantin
Trieste open 2005 (9)

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.♗g2 ♗b7 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 d6 9.b3 0-0 10.♗b2 a6 11.e4 ♘bd7 12.♕e3 ♕c7 13.♘d4 ♖fe8 14.♖ad1 ♗f8 15.♖fe1 g6 16.h3 ♖ad8 17.♔h2 ♕b8 18.♕d2 ♗a8 19.♖e2 ♘c5 20.♕e1 ♗g7 21.♗a1 ♘cd7 22.♗b2 ♘e5 23.♖ed2 ♘ed7 24.♕e3 ♗b7 25.f4 e5 26.fxe5 ♘xe5 27.♕f4 ♘h5 28.♕f1 d5 29.cxd5 ♗h6 30.♘de2 ♗xd2 31.♖xd2 ♗c8 32.♕f2 b5 33.♘d4 ♕b6 34.♘d1 ♖d6 35.♕f1 ♖f6 36.♕e2 ♕d6 37.♕e3 ♗xh3 38.♕e1 ♘g4+ 39.♔g1 ♗xg2 0-1

Gschnitzer,Oswald
Lutz,Christopher
Germany Bundesliga 2005/06 (14)

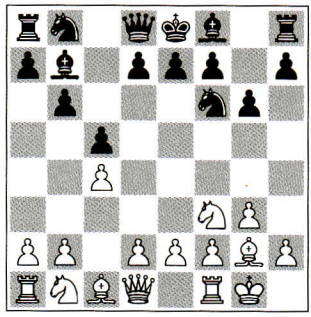
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 c5 4.♗g2 ♗b7 5.♘c3 e6 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 d6 9.♗g5 a6 10.♗xf6 ♗xf6 11.♕d3 ♖a7 12.♖fd1 ♗e7 13.♘d2 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 0-0 15.♘de4 ♖d7 16.♖ac1 ♘c6 17.f4 ♕b8 18.h4 ♕b7 19.♔h2 ♖fd8 20.♘g5 g6 21.e4 ♗f6 22.b3 ♘b4 23.♕e2 h6 24.♘f3 ♗g7 25.h5 gxh5 26.♘d4 ♘c6 27.♘xc6 ♕xc6 28.♖f1 ♗xc3 29.♖xc3 d5 30.♕xh5 dxe4 31.♕xh6 f6 32.♕xf6 ♖h7+ 33.♔g1 ♕c5+ 34.♖f2 ♖d1+ 35.♔g2 ♖h2+ 36.♔xh2 ♕xf2+ 37.♔h3 ♖h1+ 0-1

Kramnik,Vladimir
Carlsen,Magnus
Wijk aan Zee Corus 2008 (12)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.g3 b6 5.♗g2 ♗b7 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 d6 9.♖d1 a6 10.♘g5 ♗xg2 11.♔xg2 ♘c6 12.♕f4 0-0 13.♘ce4 ♘e8 14.b3 ♖a7 15.♗b2 ♖d7 16.♖ac1 ♘c7 17.♘f3 f5 18.♘c3 g5 19.♕d2 g4 20.♘e1 ♗g5 21.e3 ♖ff7 22.♔g1 ♘e8 23.♘e2 ♘f6 24.♘f4 ♕e8 25.♕c3 ♖g7 26.b4 ♘e4 27.♕b3 ♖ge7 28.♕a4 ♘e5 29.♕xa6 ♖a7 30.♕b5 ♕xb5 31.cxb5 ♖xa2 32.♖c8+ ♔f7 33.♘fd3 ♗f6 34.♘xe5 dxe5 35.♖c2 ♖ea7 36.♔g2 ♘g5 37.♖d6 e4 38.♗xf6 ♔xf6 39.♔f1 ♖a1 40.♔e2 ♖b1 41.♖d1 ♖xb4 42.♘g2 ♖xb5 43.♘f4 ♖c5 44.♖b2 b5 45.♔f1 ♖ac7 46.♖bb1 ♖b7 47.♖b4 ♖c4 48.♖b2 b4 49.♖db1 ♘f3 50.♔g2 ♖d7 51.h3 e5 52.♘e2 ♖d2 53.hxg4 fxg4 54.♖xd2 ♘xd2 55.♖b2 ♘f3 56.♔f1 b3 57.♔g2 ♖c2 0-1

Double Fianchetto Variation

1.	**c2-c4**	**c7-c5**
2.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘g8-f6**
3.	**g2-g3**	**b7-b6**
4.	**♗f1-g2**	**♗c8-b7**
5.	**0-0**	**g7-g6**



As we explained before, an interesting response to an early kingside fianchetto by White is simply for Black to do the same thing.

Kasparov's adoption of this line in the 1980's gave its popularity a boost, and the variation is appreciated by star players such as Aronian, Kramnik and Grischuk.

There are evident strategic similarities with the **Hedgehog Formation**. The advantage here is that the d6 pawn (a typical position is given in the second diagram on page 141) is defended by the e7 pawn, and thus cannot be attacked, and the f8 bishop goes directly to g7, avoiding the long manoeuvre ...♗f8-e7, ...♖e8, ...g6 and ...♗e7-f8-g7 that is common in the Hedgehog.

As always there are drawbacks: the d5-square is not controlled by a black pawn, and an early ♘d5 by White can be annoying.

In addition the classic freeing pawn advance ...d7-d5 is obviously more difficult to realize without a companion pawn on e6. Therefore Black tries for the other pawn break, namely on b5.

Let's look at some specific moves:

6. ♘b1-c3

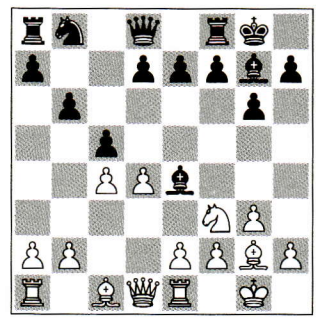
White can continue with the fianchetto theme with 6.b3, but the symmetrical nature of the position robs it of dynamism, and the line has too high a draw rate to attract players who want something more from the opening phase.

6. ... ♗f8-g7

7. d2-d4

Easily the most played move.

A worthy alternative could be 7.♖e1 (along the lines of the analogous variation in the **Hedgehog**) with the idea of pushing e2-e4: after 7...♘e4 8.♘xe4 ♗xe4 9.d4 0-0! (*following 9...cxd4, White gains the advantage with Romanishin's 10.♗h6!!*)

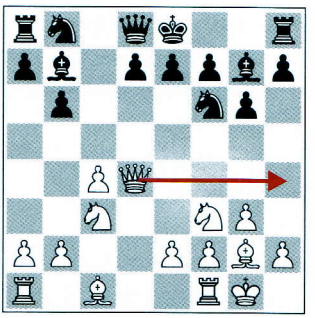


10.d5 Black achieves adequate counterplay in **Benko Gambit** fashion with 10...b5!? 11.cxb5 a6.

7. ... c5xd4

7...♘e4 is less good than in the previous note: 8.♘xe4 ♗xe4 9.d5, with a small plus for White.

8. ♕d1xd4



The variation's starting position.

It is true that on d4 the queen can be attacked with ...♘c6, but she is ready to sweep across to the kingside to take part in a dangerous attack.

The same can be said of 8.♘xd4 ♗xg2 9.♔xg2 as of 6.b3: while it may be given an occasional outing by top players, it lacks punch and will not give any real advantage to White. Even from a conceptual point of view it looks doubtful: exchanging pieces makes life easier for your opponent if he has a cramped position, as is the case here.

8. ... d7-d6

This is the move most people choose, but 8...♘c6 is better than its reputation: following 9.♕f4 (9.♕h4 is well answered by 9...h6!) 9...♖c8 10.♖d1 0-0, White's advantage (if indeed there is one) is minimal.

The immediate 8...0-0 leads to transpositions; Black usually delays castling so as to deny White the typical manoeuvre ♕h4/♗h6. However, it should be stressed that after 9.♕h4 d6 10.♗h6 ♘bd7 11.♖fd1 ♖c8 12.b3, the position is playable.

9. ♖f1-d1 ♘b8-d7

10. ♗c1-e3

10.♕h4 is an attempt to transpose to the line discussed in the previous note, but it does not work because of 10...h6! 11.♗e3 ♖c8 12.♖ac1 g5!, and Black has reasonable play.

10. ... ♖a8-c8

11. ♖a1-c1 0-0

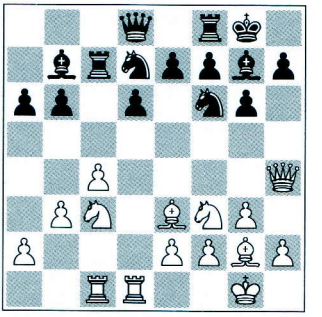
12. ♕d4-h4 a7-a6

13. b2-b3

13.♗h6 results in the loss of the c4 pawn.

13. ... ♖c8-c7

A flexible move: as Black waits for things to unfold, he clears the path to b8 or a8 for the queen.



14. ♗g2-h3!

Played by Topalov, Kramnik and Aronian – recommendation enough in itself!

The move prepares g4-g5, given that an immediate 14.g4 would allow 14...h6! 15.♗xh6 ♗xh6 16.♕xh6 ♘xg4, with a satisfactory game.

As an alternative there is a different plan: first ♗h6 and then ♘g5. However, it will be difficult to force the f6 knight to abandon its defensive post, from where it holds Black's position together.

14. ... ♕d8-b8!

This appears to be Black's best bet.

14...♕a8? is a tactical error: 15.♗xd7! ♖xd7 16.♘a4.

On the other hand, if Black continues to play a game of wait-and-see with 14...♖e8, then after 15.g4, White has an initiative: now 15...b5 is questionable as there is 16.g5; whereas following 15...♕a8 16.g5 ♘e4, the optimum move would be 17.♘a4!.

15. g3-g4

Once again the natural 15.♗h6 does not get White very far as the reply 15...b5! gives Black good counterplay, given that a double capture on b5 loses a piece to 17...♖xc1 and 18...♗xf3.

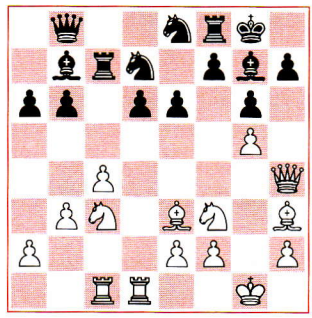
15. ... e7-e6!

So the knight can get to e8 without losing the e7 pawn.

16. g4-g5

After 16.♖xd6, there is 16...♖xc4 17.♖xd7 ♖xc3.

16. ... ♘f6-e8



To the classically trained eye, White should be better: he has five ranks to Black's three, and his opponent has a weak pawn on d6, and a passively placed knight on e8.

However, there are other factors which must be taken into account. White's pieces may be better positioned, but they have no clear targets to attack: the black king is not at any particular risk and a ...b7-b5 advance could give Black nice counterplay on the queenside.

In other words, both sides have their trumps. May the best player win!

Kramnik,Vladimir
Adams,Michael
Biel izt 1993 (8)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 c5 4.♗g2 ♗b7 5.0-0 g6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 0-0 9.♕h4 d6 10.♗h6 ♘bd7 11.b3 ♖c8 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 13.♕d4 ♔g8 14.♖ac1 ♖c5 15.b4 ♖c8 16.a3 ♖e8 17.e4 ♕c7 18.♘d5 ♕b8 19.♗h3 ♖cd8 20.♘d2 ♗a8 21.♗g2 a6 22.♘b3 ♖c8 23.f4 ♖cd8 24.♔h1 ♘h5 25.g4 ♘xf4 26.♘xf4 e5 27.♕f2 exf4 28.♕xf4 ♘e5 29.♖c3 ♕c7 30.♘d2 ♕e7 31.g5 ♖c8 32.♖fc1 b5 33.h4 ♗b7 34.♔h2 ♖c6 35.cxb5 axb5 36.♗f1 ♖ec8 37.♖xc6 ♖xc6 38.♖xc6 ♗xc6 39.♘b3 ♕a7 40.♘a5 ♗d7 41.♗e2 ♕d4 42.♔g2 ♕b2 43.♕f2 ♕xa3 44.♕f6 ♕h3+ 45.♔f2 ♕xh4+ 46.♔e3 h5 47.♘b7 ♕e1 0-1

Topalov,Veselin
Polgar,Judit
Benidorm rapid 2003 (7)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2 ♗b7 5.0-0 g6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♕xd4 ♗g7 8.♘c3 d6 9.♖d1 ♘bd7 10.♗e3 a6 11.♖ac1 ♖b8 12.b3 0-0 13.♕h4 b5 14.cxb5 axb5 15.♘d4 b4 16.♗xb7 ♖xb7 17.♘c6 ♕e8 18.♘xb4 ♕a8 19.♘c6 ♘b8 20.♘xb8 ♖fxb8 21.♕a4 h5 22.f3 ♘d7 23.♕xa8 ♖xa8 24.♘a4 ♗f8 25.♖c2 e6 26.♖dc1 ♖bb8 27.♖c7 ♘f6 28.♗a7 ♖b4 29.♗f2 ♘d5 30.♖c8 ♖bb8 31.♖xb8 ♖xb8 32.♔f1

f5 33.♖c4 ♗h6 34.♘c3 ♘e3+ 35.♗xe3 ♗xe3 36.♖c6 ♗c5 37.♘a4 ♗a3 38.♘b6 ♔f7 39.♖c7+ ♔g8 40.♘d7 ♖b5 41.h4 ♔f7 42.♖a7 ♗c1 43.a4 ♖b4 44.♘e5+ ♔f6 45.♘d3 ♖xb3 46.♘xc1 ♖b1 47.♖c7 ♖a1 48.♖c4 d5 49.♖c6 ♔e7 50.f4 ♔d7 51.♖c2 1-0

Aronian,Levon
Kramnik,Vladimir
St Vincent tt 2005 (4)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 c5 4.♗g2 ♗b7 5.0-0 g6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♕xd4 ♗g7 8.♘c3 d6 9.♖d1 ♘bd7 10.♗e3 ♖c8 11.♖ac1 0-0 12.♕h4 a6 13.b3 ♖c7 14.♗h3 ♕b8 15.g4 e6 16.g5 ♘e8 17.♗g2 b5 18.♘e4 bxc4 19.bxc4 d5 20.cxd5 ♗xd5 21.♘c5 ♘xc5 22.♗xc5 ♘d6 23.♖b1 ♕xb1 24.♖xb1 ♖xc5 25.♕a4 ♘e4 26.♕xa6 ♖c2 27.♕d3 ♖xa2 28.♖c1 ♖fa8 29.♘e1 ♖d2 30.♗xe4 ♖xd3 31.♗xd3 ♖a4 32.h3 ♗f8 33.♘f3 ♔g7 34.♗b5 ♖a5 35.♗c6 ♗xf3 36.exf3 ♖xg5+ 37.♔f1 ♖a5 38.♗e4 ♗c5 39.♗d3 e5 40.♖c4 f5 41.♖c2 ♔f6 42.♗c4 ♗d4 43.♔g2 ♔g5 44.♗g8 h5 45.♗f7 ♖a6 46.♔g3 ♖b6 47.♔g2 ♖b7 48.♗e8 ♖e7 49.♖c8 ♖b7 50.♖c2 ♖b8 51.♗f7 ♔f6 52.♗a2 ♖a8 53.♔g3 ♖a3 54.♔g2 ♔g5 55.♗f7 ♖a7 56.♗e8 ♖e7 57.♖c8 ♖e6 58.♔g3 h4+ 59.♔g2 ♔f4 60.♗f7 ♖f6 61.♖c7 ♗b6 62.♖c4+ ♗d4 63.♗d5 ♖b6 64.♖c2 g5 65.♖e2 ♖a6 66.♗b7 ♖b6 67.♗d5 ♖a6 68.♗b7 ♖a3 69.♗d5 ♖c3 70.♗b7 ♗c5 71.♗d5 ♖d3 72.♗c6 ♖d6 73.♗b7 ♗d4 74.♗a8 ♗b6 75.♗b7 ♖d4 76.♗c6 e4 77.fxe4 fxe4 78.♗b7 ♖b4 79.♗c8 ♔e5 80.♗g4 ♖c4 81.♗h5 ♔f4 82.♗g6 g4 83.♖xe4+ ♖xe4 84.♗xe4 ♔xe4 85.hxg4 ½-½

Kramnik,Vladimir
Aronian,Levon
Turin ol 2006 (5)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 c5 4.♗g2 ♗b7 5.0-0 g6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♕xd4 ♗g7 8.♘c3 d6 9.♖d1 ♘bd7 10.♗e3 ♖c8 11.♖ac1 a6 12.b3 0-0 13.♕h4 ♖c7 14.♗h3 ♕b8 15.♗g5 ♗xf3 16.exf3 b5 17.♗xd7 ♖xd7 18.♘d5 ♘xd5 19.cxd5 ♖c7 20.♖c6 ♖xc6 21.dxc6 ♖c8 22.♖c1 e6 23.♗d2 ♕c7 24.a4 d5 25.axb5 axb5 26.♕b4 ♖b8 27.♕a3 ♗d4 28.♕a6 ♗e5 29.f4 ♗d6 30.♗a5 ♕c8 31.♕a7 ♖a8 32.♕b6 ♖b8 33.♕d4 b4 34.c7 ♖a8 35.♕b6 ♗f8 36.♗xb4 ♗xb4 37.♕xb4 ♕e8 1-0

Ivanchuk,Vasily
Aronian,Levon
Morelia/Linares 2006 (2)

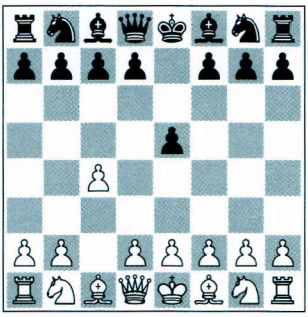
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 ♗b7 4.♗g2 c5 5.0-0 g6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 d6 9.♗e3 ♘bd7 10.♖ac1 ♖c8 11.b3 a6 12.♖fd1 0-0 13.♕d2 ♘e4 14.♘xe4 ♗xe4 15.♘e1 ♘f6 16.♗h3 ♖b8 17.♘d3 ♗a8 18.f3 e6 19.♗f2 ♖e8 20.♘b4 a5 21.♘a6 ♖c8 22.♕xd6 ♕xd6 23.♖xd6 ♘d5 24.♖d1 ♘c3 25.♖1d2 b5 26.♖d7 ♗e5 27.cxb5 ♘xb5 28.♗f1 ♗c6 29.♖7d3 ♘a3 30.f4 ♗f6 31.♘c5 ♗e7 32.♖d1 ♘b5 33.♘a4 ♗e4 34.♖d7 ♗b4 35.♗g2 ♗xg2 36.♔xg2 ♖c2 37.♖b7 ♘a3 38.♖dd7 ♖f8 39.♔f3 ♘b1 40.♗e3 ♖xa2 41.♗c5 ♘d2+ 42.♔g2 ♗xc5 43.♘xc5 e5 44.♘e6 exf4 45.♖xf7 1-0

Illescas Cordoba,Miguel
Khalifman,Alexander
Dos Hermanas 2003 (9)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 c5 4.♗g2 ♗b7 5.0-0 g6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 d6 9.♗e3 ♘bd7 10.♖ac1 ♖c8 11.b3 a6 12.♘d5 0-0 13.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 14.♕d2 ♖c7 15.♘e1 ♕b8 16.♗xb7 ♕xb7 17.♘d3 ♗g7 18.♘b4 ♘f6 19.♘d5 ♘xd5 20.cxd5 ♖fc8 21.♖xc7 ♖xc7 22.♖c1 h5 23.♖xc7 ♕xc7 24.♕c1 ♕xc1+ 25.♗xc1 ½-½

English 1...e5

1. ... e7-e5



It has previously been noted that from a conceptual point of view this represents the acid test for the **English Opening**. Black ambitiously grabs a key centre square and transforms the English into a **Sicilian with reversed colours**.

It is not difficult to understand the appeal of this approach: **1...e5** is the move that leads to the most victories and the fewest draws. In other words, the strongest and most combative move!

However, it is not the most popular reply (1...♘f6 remains number 1), probably because an 1.e4 player is understandably reluctant to face a Sicilian minus a tempo.

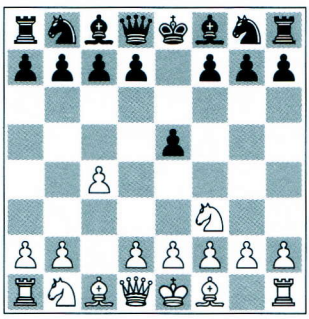
We will now examine the moves: it is only logical that if Black has a wide variety of second move options at his disposal when playing the **Sicilian**, then White will obviously have even more choices thanks to the extra tempo.

However, two moves dominate in popularity, namely **2.g3** and above all **2.♘c3**, both of which we discuss further on.

It is curious that 2.d3 is a rarity, when you think that 2...d6 is the most frequent continuation in the **Sicilian**.

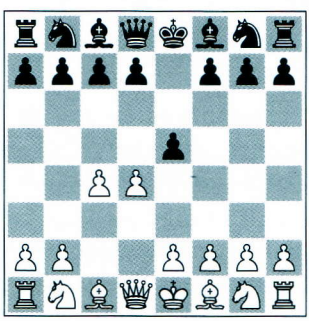
Equally strange is that the promising move 2.e3!? is comparatively uncommon. Ahead a tempo, White aims for the d2-d4 push, whereas in the popular **Sicilian with 2...e6**, Black rarely manages to make this advance.

A quick note regarding 2.♘f3!?.



White is playing the **Nimzowitsch Variation** of the **Sicilian** with reversed colours! However, notwithstanding the extra tempo, after 2...e4 3.♘d4 ♘c6! 4.♘xc6 (4.♘c2 d5! is good for Black) 4...dxc6 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.♕c2 ♗f5, Black has no cause for complaint.

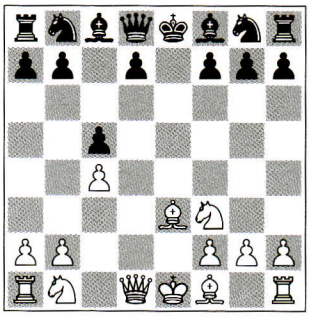
2.d4



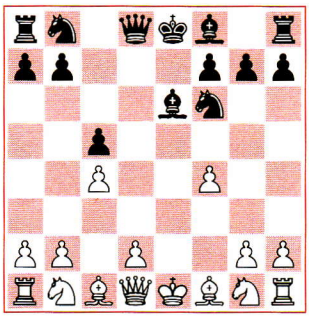
is a move that has always had a bad reputation. Is it justified? After 2...exd4 3.♕xd4 ♘c6 White is playing a sort of

Scandinavian with a pawn on c4. It is true that this does not strike you as particularly promising, but 3.♘f3!? might give us cause to think again.

It should be noted that if Black tries to hang on to his extra pawn with 3...c5 (3...♗b4+ is probably the best idea), White should achieve sufficient compensation after 4.e3! dxe3 5.♗xe3.



If we ignore the advanced white f-pawn, you are dealing with the same position – with reversed colours – that arises from 1.e4 c5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6!? 4.c4 e6! 5.dxe6 ♗xe6



and which is considered to be excellent for Black. Without doubt the pawn is poorly placed on f4 rather than f2, but the significance of this is not so great, and the gambit appears to be good in both lines.

Mason,James
Rosenthal,Samuel
London 1883

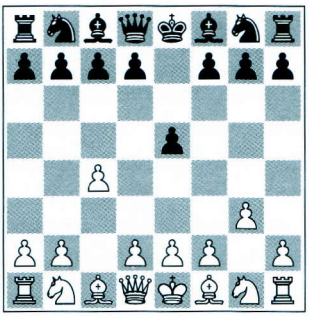
1.e3 e5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘f3 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗d6 7.♗e2 0-0 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.d4 ♕f6 10.c4 b6 11.♗b2 ♗g4 12.d5 ♘e7 13.♘d2 ♗xe2 14.♕xe2 ♕g6 15.♖ac1 ♖ae8 16.e4 f5 17.f3 f4 18.♘b3 ♕h5 19.c5 bxc5 20.♘xc5 ♖f6 21.♘d3 ♖h6 22.h3 ♖g6 23.♔h1 ♖g3 24.♗c3 ♘f5 25.exf5 e4 26.♖ce1 ♖e7 27.fxe4 ♕xe2 28.♖xe2 ♖xd3 29.e5 ♖xd5 30.♖xf4 ♗xe5 31.♖fe4 ♖d1+ 32.♗e1 ♖d5 33.g4 h6 34.♔g2 ♔f7 35.♗h4 ♖e8 36.♗g3 ♔f6 37.♗e1 g6 38.♗h4+ g5 39.♗g3 ♖e7 40.♗xe5+ ♖exe5 41.♖xe5 ♖xe5 42.♖xe5 ♔xe5 43.♔f3 h5 44.♔e3 hxg4 45.hxg4 ♔d5 46.♔d3 c5 47.♔c3 c4 48.f6 ♔e6 49.♔xc4 ♔xf6 50.♔d4 ♔e6 51.♔e4 a6 52.a3 a5 53.a4 ♔f6 54.♔d5 ♔f7 55.♔e5 ♔g6 56.♔e6 ♔g7 57.♔f5 ♔f7 58.♔xg5 ♔g7 59.♔f5 ♔f7 60.♔e5 ♔g6 61.♔d5 ♔g5 62.♔c5 ♔xg4 63.♔b5 ♔f5 64.♔xa5 ♔e6 65.♔b6 ♔d7 66.♔b7 1-0

Réti,Richard
Torre Repetto,Carlos
Marienbad 1925 (12)

1.c4 e5 2.♘f3 e4 3.♘d4 ♘c6 4.♘xc6 dxc6 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.g3 ♗c5 7.♗g2 ♗f5 8.0-0 0-0 9.♔h1 ♕d4 10.♕b3 ♖fe8 11.♘d1 ♖ad8 12.♘e3 ♗c8 13.♕c2 ♕e5 14.f3 ♕h5 15.b4 ♗xb4 16.fxe4 ♕xe2 17.♗f3 ♕d3 18.♕xd3 ♖xd3 19.♗e2 ♖xd2 20.♗xd2 ♗xd2 21.♘f5 ♘xe4 22.♗d3 g6 23.♘h4 ♗h3 24.♘g2 ♘c5 25.♖fd1 ♗c3 26.♖ac1 ♗g4 27.♖f1 ♗d2 28.♖c2 ♗a5 29.♘f4 ♘xd3 30.♘xd3 ♗e2 0-1

2.g3 Variation

1. c2-c4 e7-e5
2. g2-g3



White is immediately going to put the f1 bishop on its most natural diagonal. Delaying the development of the knight to c3 sidesteps the irritating Black lines with ...♗b4 that are so fashionable, but at the same time this excludes some interesting options: for example, the d2-d4 advance is harder to execute.

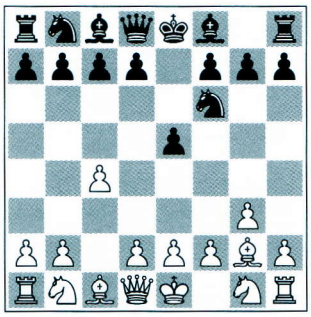
2. ... ♘g8-f6

Naturally, Black has other choices, but this the most frequently played move: by not playing ...♘c6, Black maintains the option of occupying the centre with ...c7-c6 and ...d7-d5.

2...♘c6 is also playable: Black generally continues with the fianchetto ...g7-g6 and ...♗g7, establishing a **reverse Closed Sicilian**, which is examined in detail in the section relating to 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 g6, which is the standard line.

3. ♗f1-g2

Now, moves like 3...♘c6 or 3...♗c5 transpose to variations that are examined under the move 2.♘c3.



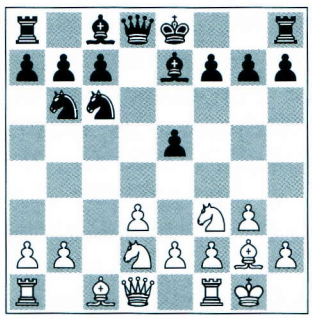
A) 3. ... d7-d5

This usually ends up as a **Four Knights Defence**, but here White has the interesting possibility of not playing ♘c3.

4. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5
5. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6
6. 0-0 ♘d5-b6

6...♗e7 7.d4! has given White good results.

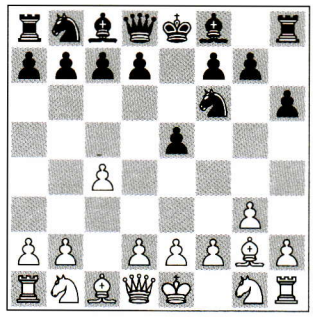
7. d2-d3 ♗f8-e7
8. ♘b1-d2!?



8.♘c3 transposes to 'normal' lines. The text move has recently been borrowed from the **Sicilian**. In some minor **Najdorf** lines the idea of fianchettoing the king's bishop (usually associated with the normal ...♘bd7) is gaining in popularity; for example, in the variation 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e2 ♘bd7!? 7.f4 g6, more or less arriving at the po-

sition in question with reversed colours.

B) 3. ... h7-h6!?



This seems to be the sort of wasted move that would appeal to a beginner, but more advanced players seem to like it too; many super grandmasters have chosen it, which helps to explain its 50+% performance.

3...h6 is largely a wait-and-see move: Black would like to move his bishop to b4 – and therefore he is prepared to wait for ♘c3; in the event of White playing his pawn to d3, Black will put the bishop on c5.

4. ♘b1-c3

If White develops his other knight with 4.♘f3, then the move 4...e4! is now good: 5.♘d4 (♘g5 is no longer possible!) 5...♘c6, with a satisfactory game for Black.

4.d4 does not give White much either: after 4...e4! 5.♘c3 ♗b4, the importance of having prevented ♘g5 becomes clear.

4. ... ♗f8-b4

And we are in a type of reverse **Sicilian Rossolimo Variation** – 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 – minus a tempo and with the pawn on h6, which is of doubtful usefulness. Nonetheless, Black's results with this line have been excellent.

5. ♘g1-f3

5.♘d5 ♘xd5 6.cxd5 0-0 does not cause Black any headaches.

It may be a good idea to prevent the creation of doubled pawns by playing 5.♕c2, even if after 5...0-0 6.a3 ♗xc3 7.♕xc3 ♕e7, Black's fluid piece play looks like enough compensation for conceding the advantage of the bishop pair.

5. ... e5-e4!?

This is the most ambitious way to proceed.

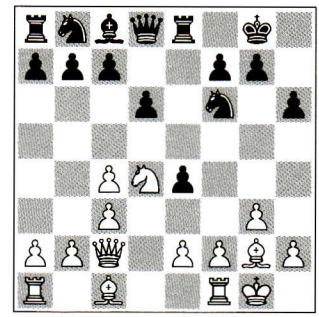
6. ♘f3-d4 ♗b4xc3

Otherwise the e4 pawn will be lost.

7. d2xc3

More dynamic than recapturing with the other pawn.

7. ... 0-0
8. ♕d1-c2 ♖f8-e8
9. 0-0 d7-d6

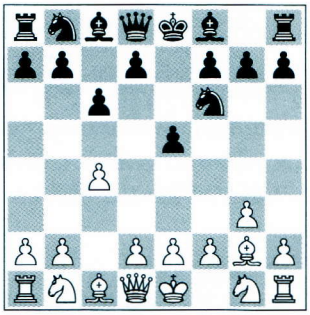


10. ♖f1-d1 ♘b8-d7

The unpleasant presence of the pawn on e4 makes it hard for White to exploit his dark-squared bishop.

C) 3. ... c7-c6

Sometimes known as the **Keres Variation**, this is a logical way to continue.



Black profits from the mobility of his c-pawn to occupy the centre with ...d7-d5. He is playing the **Alapin Variation** of the **Sicilian** (1.e4 c5 2.c3) minus a tempo; but in compensation, White has already committed himself to the fianchetto, which is not the most dynamic way to deal with **Sicilian Alapin**.

Now White has two options to choose from (4.♘f3 and 4.d4), given that 4.♘c3 has allowed Black to score nicely after 4...d5.

C1) 4. ♘g1-f3

As with the 2...♘f6 line of the **Sicilian Alapin**, you encourage the pawn to advance in the hope that it will prove to be a weakness.

4. ... e5-e4
5. ♘f3-d4

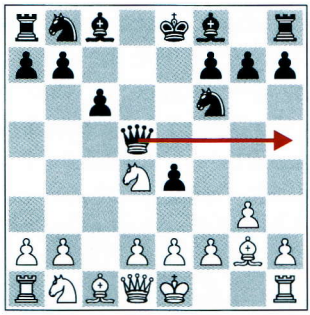
Now that Black can play his pawn to d5, it is not such a hot idea to play 5.♘g5.

5. ... d7-d5

5...♕b6!? merits attention.

6. c4xd5 ♕d8xd5!

Gaining a tempo by attacking the knight, and preparing to glide over to h5: experience has shown us that capturing with the queen is stronger than with the pawn: 6...cxd5 7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.d3, and Black's centre starts to totter.



7. ♘d4-c2

7.♘b3 ♕h5 8.h3 ♗d6 also gives Black a promising game.

7. ... ♕d5-h5
8. h2-h3

White cannot allow ...♗h3, which would seriously weaken his light squares.

8. ... ♕h5-g6

Putting a stop to the d2-d3 pawn break.

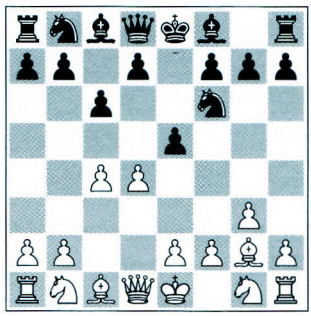
9. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-d6
10. d2-d3

This is the lesser of two evils, given that following 10.♘e3 0-0 Black has obtained optimum results.

10. ... e4xd3
11. ♕d1xd3 ♕g6xd3
12. e2xd3

The d3 pawn is not pretty, but the position is more or less balanced.

C2) 4. d2-d4



A typical move when your adversary cannot play ♘c6. For the same reason, the ...d7-d5 advance in the **Sicilian Alapin** is justified by the presence of the c3 pawn.

Now 4...d6, which creates positions reminiscent of the Old Indian, is a playable but passive option. Strangely, even though 4...e4 5.♘c3 d5 has performed well, it is little played. Usually Black opts for one of the following two moves:

C21) 4. ... ♗f8-b4+
5. ♗c1-d2 ♗b4xd2+
6. ♕d1xd2 d7-d6

The most solid line. Unlike in the line with 4...d6, Black has managed to free himself of his bad bishop.

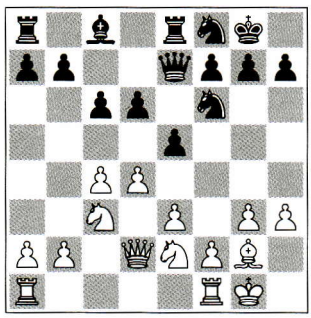
7. ♘b1-c3

The queen exchange after 7.dxe5 does not gain anything for White.

7. ... 0-0
8. e2-e3

White does not want to close the g2 bishop's diagonal.

8. ... ♕d8-e7
9. ♘g1-e2 ♖f8-e8
10. h2-h3 ♘b8-d7
11. 0-0 ♘d7-f8



In this improved version of the **Old Indian**, White's advantage, presuming there is one, is minimal.

C22) 4. ... e5xd4
5. ♕d1xd4 d7-d5

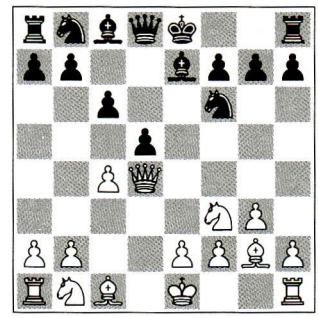
Recently some players, (e.g. Anand) have experimented with the interesting move 5...♘a6!? 6.♘f3 (6.♘c3!?) 6...♗c5 7.♕e5+ ♕e7 8.♕xe7+ ♗xe7, with equality.

6. ♘g1-f3

6.cxd5 usually transposes.

6. ... ♗f8-e7

The most natural.



7. c4xd5

Denying Black the options of ...dxc4 or ...c5, and creating a weak d5 pawn. However, this concedes the c6-square for the knight, and subsequent active play for Black.

7. ... c6xd5
8. 0-0

Otherwise 8.♘c3, with a probable transposition.

8. ... ♘b8-c6
9. ♕d4-a4 0-0
10. ♘b1-c3 ♗c8-e6

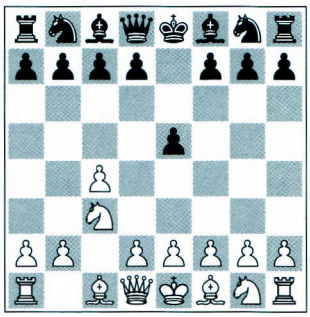
10...♕b6 11.♕b5 leaves White slightly better.

11. ♖f1-d1 a7-a6

This position has the characteristics of the **Tarrasch Defence**: active piece play compensates for the isolated pawn on d5.

Variations with 2.♘c3

This is by far and away the most common way to continue when Black replies to the English with 1...e5:



We will look at what follows in the following order:

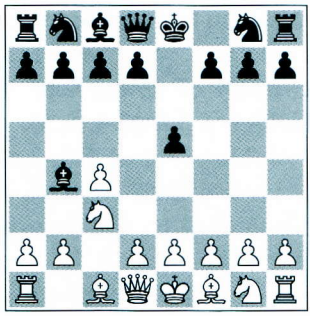
° **Shirov Variation 2...♗b4**
° **Kasparov Variation 2...d6**
° **Variations with 2...♘c6**

° **Three Knights variations**
- 3.♘f3 (without ♘f6)
- English 3.g3 against the King's Indian

° **Variations with 2...♘f6**
- English Two Knights Variation: 2.♘c3 ♘f6 (without ♘f3 and ♘c6)
- Four Knights Variation: 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6
- Four Knights Variation with 4.g3: 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3

Shirov Variation 2...♗b4

1. c2-c4 e7-e5
2. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4



The first thing we need to establish is that Shirov was not the first to play this line. As is the case with these eponymous lines, somebody has almost always played the variation before. In this case, Kolisch employed it as far back as 1872!
Nonetheless, the Latvian-born grandmaster's name is rightly attached to this line, given his successful patronage in the 1990's.

The idea is the same as for the **Sicilian Rossolimo Variation** – 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 – , namely to take on c3 so as to compromise White's pawn structure and to get rid of what would be a bad bishop if ...d7-d6 were played. Obviously, here being a tempo down is no small matter, and the absence of a knight on f6 allows 3.♘d5, with gain of tempo. However, White can ignore the 'threat' and continue with cheerful disregard. Now, excluding the playable 3.♘f3 and 3.♕c2, the sharpest replies are:

A) 3. g2-g3

White remains unfazed and continues with normal development.

3. ... ♗b4xc3

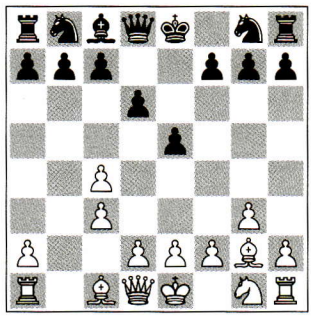
4. b2xc3

Recapturing with the other pawn, which assists in the development of the c1 bishop, has some sense in the **Petroff** – 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 – and the **Alekhine** – 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.♘c3 ♘xc3 4.dxc3 – , but here it seems unwise, given the slow pace of the English Opening.

4. ... d7-d6

5. ♗f1-g2

In the past this position was unanimously considered to be favourable for White. However, it is imprudent to dogmatically overestimate the importance of the possession of the two bishops.



5. ... ♘g8-e7

One of many possible moves; maintaining the mobility of the f-pawn seems wise.

6. d2-d3 ♘b8-c6

7. ♖a1-b1 0-0

8. ♘g1-h3!? ♗c8-d7

9. f2-f4

After 9.♖xb7??, Black picks up a piece with 9...♕c8.

9. ... ♕d8-c8

9...d5 looks risky as there is 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♕b3!.

10. ♘h3-f2

and White's advantage is only academic.

B) 3. ♕d1-b3

Attacking the bishop and preventing the pawns being doubled, but on this square the queen is a little vulnerable to harassment.

3. ... ♘b8-c6

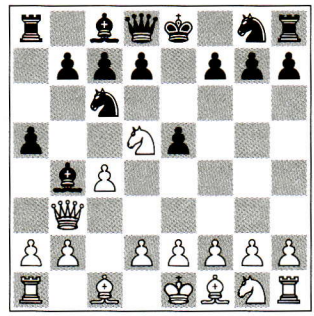
Not only the most natural move, but also the most played one as well.

4. ♘c3-d5

4.a3 permits 4...♘d4! 5.♕d1 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♘c6 7.g3 d6 8.♗g2, and in comparison to Variation A, White has wasted a tempo with 4.a3.

The move 4.♘f3 (threatening 5.♘xe5) also appears harmless enough: after 4...d6 5.a3 ♗xc3 6.♕xc3 ♘ge7 7.e3 0-0 8.d4 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♖e8, lively piece play compensates for not having the bishop pair.

4. ... a7-a5



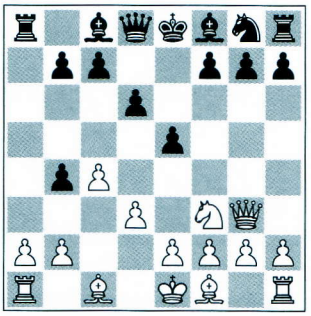
5. ♕b3-g3

By attacking g7, White disturbs Black's development.

5. ... ♗b4-f8

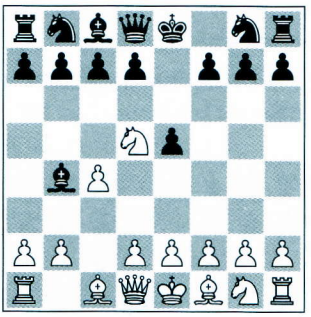
The king move 5...♔f8 is a playable alternative.

6. ♘g1-f3 d7-d6
7. d2-d3 ♘c6-b4!?
8. ♘d5xb4 a5xb4



Black has a playable position... which is odd when you consider that all his remaining pieces are on their original squares!

C) 3. ♘c3-d5

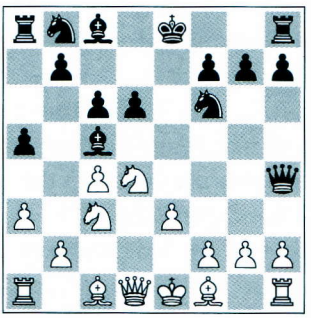


The critical line: with a single hop the attacked becomes the attacker. However, soon the knight will be booted from d5, and thus the gain of tempo is only illusory.

C1) 3. ... a7-a5
4. ♘g1-f3

Capturing on b4 activates the a8 rook, whereas after 4.a3, the bishop on b4 can retreat to e7 or c5. Compared to Variations C3 and C4, it is not clear if either side benefits from their respective pawn moves on the a-file.

4. ... d7-d6
5. a2-a3 ♗b4-c5
6. d2-d4 e5xd4
7. ♘f3xd4 c7-c6
8. ♘d5-c3 ♕d8-h4!?
9. e2-e3 ♘g8-f6

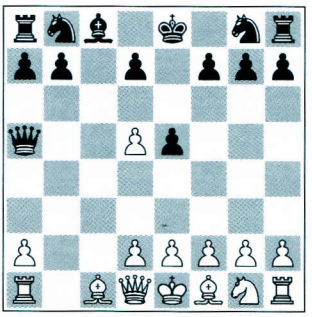


with positions that are difficult to assess.

C2) 3. ... ♗b4-a5
4. b2-b4 c7-c6

And now we see the idea:

5. b4xa5 c6xd5
6. c4xd5 ♕d8xa5



A curious position in which the only developed piece is the black queen!

7. e2-e4 ♘g8-f6
8. f2-f3

After 8.♕c2 or 8.♗d3, the move 8...♘a6 – with the plan of ...♘b4 or ...♘c5 – gives Black sufficient counterplay.

8. ... ♘b8-a6
9. ♘g1-e2 ♘a6-c5
10. ♘e2-c3

As is common with this line, the possession of the two bishops represents an edge for White.

Well, that's what theory says... but practice is another matter!

C3) 3. ... ♗b4-c5

The most natural move, but this does not necessarily mean that it's the best.

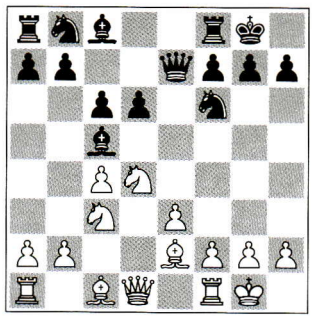
4. ♘g1-f3

The line 4.e3 c6 5.d4!? is not easy to judge.

4. ... c7-c6

4...e4 looks hasty, as it will be met by 5.♘g5! f5 6.d4, and White has a small plus.

5. ♘d5-c3 ♕d8-e7
6. e2-e3 d7-d6
7. d2-d4 e5xd4
8. ♘f3xd4 ♘g8-f6
9. ♗f1-e2 0-0
10. 0-0



It is not easy for White to exploit either his space advantage or the weak d6 pawn, and thus the evaluation of equality given by the various chess engines would appear to be the most correct.

C4) 3. ... ♗b4-e7

Black will put his pawns on dark squares, so it is OK to exchange off the dark-squared bishop.

4. d2-d4

For 4.♘f3 d6 5.d4 see the following note.

4. ... d7-d6
5. e2-e4

The most energetic move. After 5.♘f3, both the solid 5...c6 6.♘xe7 ♕xe7 and the aggressive 5...e4!? 6.♘d2 f5 have proved to be reliable.

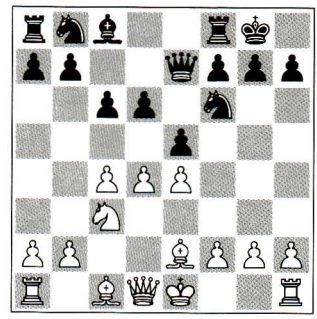
5. ... c7-c6

Also the alternative 5...♘f6 is a good solid move.

6. ♘d5xe7 ♕d8xe7
7. ♘g1-e2 ♘g8-f6
8. ♘e2-c3

The best reply to 8.f3 appears to be 8...d5!.

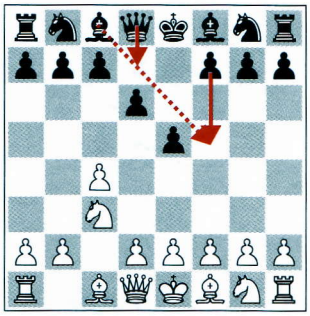
8. ... 0-0
9. ♗f1-e2



with the typical strategic conflict: White will seek to make the most of his dark-squared bishop, whereas Black will put his faith in the solidity of his position and see how events unfold.

Kasparov Variation 2...d6

2. ... d7-d6



This dynamic move easily transposes to other lines; here we will deal with the variations that have their own distinct identity.

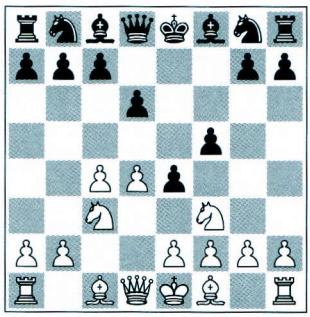
Black delays the development of the knight to c6 and blocks the path of the f8 bishop, which can no longer go to b4. In doing so, Black presents White with a provocative challenge to play d2-d4, counting on making the most of the exposed position of the white queen (the famously rapid victory of Kasparov against Hübner in 1985 is a good example).

If White does not take up the gauntlet, Black can continue with the ...f7-f5 advance, or otherwise establish a kingside initiative with ...♗e6, ...♘c6 and ...♕d7. As you will have already gathered, this is an ambitious set-up, and it comes as no surprise that it was part of the young Kasparov's repertoire, as during his career he was always on the lookout for dynamic positions that allowed him to show his tactical flair.

A) 3. ♘g1-f3 f7-f5!?
4. d2-d4

Other moves lead into variations that can be found in the respective sections that deal with the **King's Indian Defence** against the **English**.

4. ... e5-e4



5. ♘f3-g5

The number 1 choice.

5.♗g5 ♗e7 favours Black, as after an exchange on e7 he will make the annoying pawn move ...e4-e3.

5.♘d2 has helped Black to do well: after 5...♘f6 6.e3 g6 7.♗e2 ♗g7 8.b4 0-0, White expands on the queenside, but Black's kingside initiative could prove to be dangerous.

5. ... ♗f8-e7

The most natural move.

Two other possibilities are 5...♘f6 and 5...c6, though they tend to lead into the main line. The audacious 5...h6 6.♘h3 g5 is nicely frustrated by 7.♘g1! (with the idea of h4).

6. ♘g5-h3 ♘g8-f6
7. g2-g3

A very common second choice is 7.e3 c6 8.♘f4 ♘a6 9.h4 0-0 10.♗e2 ♘c7 11.d5 ♘d7, and both sides have chances.

7. ... c7-c6
8. ♗f1-g2 0-0
9. 0-0 ♘b8-a6
10. d4-d5

Physically preventing Black from occupying this square with his own pawn and gaining space at the same time. However, it has the defect of weakening both the c5- and e5-squares.

10. ... ♘a6-c7

Putting pressure on the d5 pawn.

11. a2-a4!

Preventing ...b7-b5 after the exchange on d5.

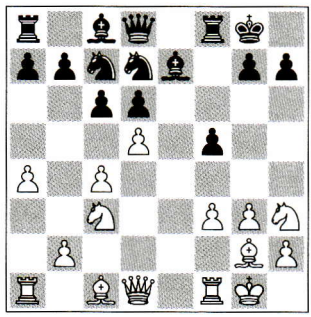
11. ... ♘f6-d7

12. f2-f3

Denying Black an outpost on e4.

12. ... e4xf3

13. e2xf3



White controls more space and his pieces look better coordinated, but in reality Black's pieces are ready to strike out, and White's advantage is at best no more than minimal.

B) 3. g2-g3 ♗c8-e6

4. ♗f1-g2 c7-c6!?

4...♘c6 transposes to one of the 2...♘c6 variations.

5. d2-d3 f7-f5

6. e2-e3

Naturally, 6.♘f3 is playable.

6. ... ♘g8-f6

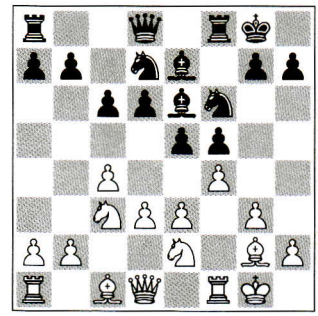
7. ♘g1-e2 ♗f8-e7

8. 0-0 0-0

9. f2-f4

A standard advance whose scope is to block Black's kingside initiative.

9. ... ♘b8-d7



The position is in balance and either side could win.

C) 3. d2-d4 e5xd4

3...♘f6 takes us into the **Ukraine Defence**, which was discussed in Vol. 2.

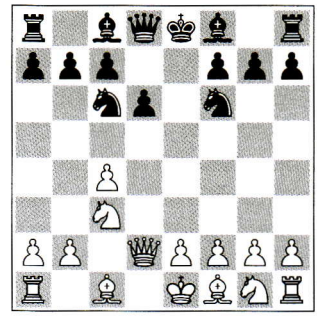
4. ♕d1xd4 ♘b8-c6

Sometimes Black postpones this and opts for the subtle 4...♘f6, remembering that after a later ...♘c6 we have simply transposed to the main line.

5. ♕d4-d2

White would like to fianchetto both bishops so as to increase his control of the centre, and in that context the d2-square looks like the natural home for the queen.

5. ... ♘g8-f6



6. e2-e4

Gaining space in the centre, but at the cost of making the central pawn structure more rigid.

Unfortunately for White, the plan of the double fianchetto proves to be too slow: 6.g3 ♗e6 7.♘d5 (7.b3 d5 and Black is better) 7...♘e5 8.b3 ♘e4, with active play for Black.

Also after 6.b3 ♗e6!, White is forced to play e2-e4 in order to stop ...d6-d5.

6.	**...**	**g7-g6**
7.	**b2-b3**	**♗f8-g7**
8.	**♗c1-b2**	**0-0**
9.	**♗f1-d3**	**♖f8-e8**

This pawn structure is reminiscent of several **King's Indian** positions, but here White has lost tempi (♕d1-d4-d2) and Black's counterplay is highly menacing.

Macieja,Bartlomiej
Volokitin,Andrey
Bermuda 2005 (3)

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 h6 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 d6 7.♘e2 ♗e6 8.d3 ♕d7 9.h3 g5 10.f3 ♘a6 11.h4 0-0-0 12.hxg5 hxg5 13.♗xg5 ♖xh1+ 14.♗xh1 ♖h8 15.♔f2 ♘h7 16.♗h4 f5 17.exf5 ♗xf5 18.d4 ♕e6 19.c5 ♘f6 20.♕b3 ♘d5 21.♖e1 ♖e8 22.♘c1 ♕h6 23.♕xd5 ♕d2+ 24.♘e2 ♘xc5 0-1

Ribli,Zoltan
Rustemov,Alexander
Germany Bundesliga 2005/06 (5)

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 h6 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.♘f3 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 e4 7.♘d4 0-0 8.0-0 d6 9.f3 c5 10.♘c2 exf3 11.♖xf3 ♘c6 12.d3 ♘g4 13.h3 ♘ge5 14.♖f2 ♕a5 15.♖b1 ♕c7 16.e4 ♘e7 17.♗f4 ♘5g6 18.♘e3 ♖b8 19.♕h5 ♔h7 20.♖bf1 f6 21.♗xh6 gxh6 22.♖xf6 ♖xf6 23.♖xf6 ♔g7 24.♘d5 ♕d8 25.e5 ♗f5 26.♘xe7 ♕xe7 27.♕xf5 ♘xe5 28.♖e6 ♕g5 29.♕xg5+ hxg5 30.♖xd6 b5 31.cxb5 ♖xb5 32.♗e4 c4 33.dxc4 ♖b2 34.c5 ♖e2 35.♖d4 ♖e3 36.♔f2 ♖xc3 37.c6 a6 38.♖d6 a5 39.♖e6 ♖c5 40.c7 1-0

Van Wely,Loek
Van den Doel,Erik
Leeuwarden ch-NED 2005 (4)

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 ♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 6.♕xd2 d6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.e3 ♗e6 9.b3 exd4 10.♕xd4 d5 11.cxd5 ♗xd5 12.e4 ♗e6 13.♘ge2 ♕b6 14.♘a4 ♕a5+ 15.♕c3 ♕xc3+ 16.♘axc3 ♘a6 17.h3 ♖ad8 18.f4 ♘b4 19.♔f2 ♖d2 20.a3 ♘a6 21.b4 ♖fd8 22.e5 ♘e8 23.♘e4 ♖b2 24.♖hb1 ♖xb1 25.♖xb1 f6 26.♔e3 ♘ac7 27.♘c5 ♗c8 28.♘c3 ♘a8 29.b5 ♘b6 30.bxc6 bxc6 31.e6 ♘d6 32.g4 ♘dc4+ 33.♔f2 ♖d2+ 34.♔g1 ♔f8 35.a4 ♖c2 36.♘3e4 ♔e7 37.f5 ♘e3 38.♗f3 ♖a2 39.♘c3 ♖c2 40.♘3e4 ♖a2 41.♘g3 ♘ec4 42.♗xc6 ♖c2 43.♘b3 ♘e5 44.♗g2 ♘xa4 45.♖a1 ♖c4 46.♘a5 ♖b4 47.♘c6+ ♘xc6 48.♗xc6 ♘c5 49.♖xa7+ ♗b7 50.♘e4 1-0

Schwarz,Michael
Hertneck,Gerald
Germany Bundesliga 2003/04 (3)

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.♘f3 e4 5.♘d4 d5 6.cxd5 ♕xd5 7.♘c2 ♕h5

8.h3 ♕g6 9.♘c3 ♗d6 10.♘e3 0-0 11.♕c2 ♖e8 12.b3 ♘a6 13.♗b2 ♘b4 14.♕c1 ♗e6 15.h4 h5 16.0-0 ♖ad8 17.a3 ♘bd5 18.♘cxd5 ♘xd5 19.♕c2 ♗g4 20.♘xg4 ♕xg4 21.e3 g5 22.hxg5 ♗e5 23.♗xe5 ♖xe5 24.f4 exf3 25.♖xf3 ♖xg5 26.♖af1 ♖g7 27.♕c4 ♕xc4 28.bxc4 ♘b6 29.c5 ♘c4 30.♖f4 ♘xd2 31.♖1f2 ♘b3 32.♖f5 ♖d1+ 33.♔h2 ♖c1 34.♖xh5 ♖xc5 35.♖h4 ♖e5 36.e4 ♘d4 37.♗f1 b5 38.♖h6 ♖e6 39.♖h4 c5 40.♖h5 c4 41.a4 a6 42.axb5 axb5 43.♖d5 ♖xe4 44.♖d8+ ♔h7 45.♗g2 ♖e2 46.♖xe2 ♘xe2 47.♗e4+ ♔h6 48.♖d6+ ♔g5 49.♖d5+ ♔g4 50.♖xb5 ♘xg3 51.♗d5 ♘f1+ 52.♔g2 ♘e3+ 53.♔f2 ♔f4 54.♗f3 f5 55.♖c5 ♖a7 56.♗e2 ♖a2 57.♔e1 ♔g3 58.♖c6 ♖a1+ 59.♔d2 ♔f2 60.♗h5 ♖h1 61.♗e2 ♖h8 62.♗xc4 ♘xc4+ 63.♖xc4 ♖d8+ 64.♔c3 ♔e3 65.♖c5 f4 66.♖e5+ ♔f2 67.♔c2 f3 68.♖e7 ♔f1 69.♖f7 f2 0-1

Kosten,Anthony
Schekachev,Andrey
Clermont Ferrand 2003 (11)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.g3 e5 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♕xd4 d5 6.♘f3 ♗e6 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.♕a4 ♗c5 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗xf6 ♕xf6 12.♘c3 0-0 13.♘e1 ♖fd8 14.♘d3 ♗d4 15.♖ac1 a6 16.♘f4 b5 17.♕d1 ♘e7 18.e3 ♗xc3 19.♖xc3 ♖ac8 20.♖xc8 ♖xc8 21.♕d2 d4 22.♕xd4 ♕xd4 23.exd4 ♗xa2 24.♖a1 ♗b3 25.♗b7 ♖c2 26.♗xa6 g5 27.♘d3 ♗c4 28.♘e5 ♗d5 29.♗xb5 ♘f5 30.♗d3 1-0

Polugaevsky,Lev
Nezhmetdinov,Rashid
Sochi 1958

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘c3 e5 4.e4 exd4 5.♕xd4 ♘c6 6.♕d2 g6 7.b3 ♗g7 8.♗b2 0-0 9.♗d3 ♘g4 10.♘ge2 ♕h4 11.♘g3 ♘ge5 12.0-0 f5 13.f3 ♗h6 14.♕d1 f4 15.♘ge2 g5 16.♘d5 g4 17.g3 fxg3 18.hxg3 ♕h3 19.f4 ♗e6 20.♗c2 ♖f7 21.♔f2 ♕h2+ 22.♔e3 ♗xd5 23.cxd5 ♘b4 24.♖h1 ♖xf4 25.♖xh2 ♖f3+ 26.♔d4 ♗g7 27.a4 c5+ 28.dxc6 bxc6 29.♗d3 ♘exd3+ 30.♔c4 d5+ 31.exd5 cxd5+ 32.♔b5 ♖b8+ 33.♔a5 ♘c6+ 0-1

Hübner,Robert
Kasparov,Garry
Hamburg match 1985 (1)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.d4 exd4 4.♕xd4 ♘f6 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♕d2 ♗e6 7.♘d5 ♘e5 8.b3 ♘e4 9.♕e3 ♘c5 10.♗b2 c6 11.♘f4 ♘g4 12.♕d4 ♘e4 13.♗h3 ♕a5+ 14.♔f1 ♘gxf2 15.♗xe6 fxe6 16.♘xe6 ♔d7 17.♘h3 ♘xh3 18.♕xe4 ♖e8 19.♘c5+ ♕xc5 20.♕g4+ ♔c7 21.♕xh3 ♗e7 22.♗xg7 ♖hf8+ 23.♗xf8 ♖xf8+ 24.♔e1 ♕f2+ 25.♔d1 ♕d4+ 26.♔c2 ♕e4+ 27.♔d2 ♗g5+ 28.♔c3 ♕e5+ 0-1

Miedema,Roi
Reinderman,Dimitri
Haaksbergen ch-NED 2009 (6)

1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.♘c3 exd4 4.♕xd4 ♘f6 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♕d2 ♗e6 7.♘d5 ♘e5 8.b3 ♘e4 9.♕e3 ♘c5 10.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 11.♕xf3 c6 12.♘f4 ♗e7

13.♘xe6 fxe6 14.♗d2 ♗f6 15.♖d1 ♗d4 16.b4 ♘d7 17.♗h3 ♘e5 18.♕e4 ♕f6 19.0-0 d5 20.cxd5 exd5 21.♕f5 ♕xf5 22.♗xf5 ♘c4 23.♗c1 ♗f6 24.b5 ♘d6 25.♗d3 c5 26.♗f4 ♘c8 27.♗f5 ♘b6 28.a4 ♘xa4 29.♖xd5 ♘c3 30.♖xc5 ♘e2+ 31.♔h1 ♘xf4 32.♖e1+ ♔f8 33.gxf4 g6 34.♖e6 ♗h4 35.♗e4 ♖e8 36.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 37.♖c7 ♖f8 38.♖xh7 ♖xf4 39.f3 g5 40.♔g2 ♔f8 41.♗d5 ♖f5 42.♗c4 ♖f4 43.♗e6 ♖f6 44.♗c4 a6 45.♖xb7 axb5 46.♖xb5 ♔e7 47.♗d3 ♖f8 48.♗e4 ♔e6 49.♔h3 ♖f4 50.♗d5+ ♔d6 51.♗e4 ♔e6 52.♗b7 ♔f6 53.♖b6+ ♔e7 54.♗e4 ♔f7 55.♖h6 ♔e7 56.♔g2 ♖f6 57.♖h7+ ♖f7 58.♖h5 ♖f8 59.♔f1 ♖b8 60.♔g2 ♖f8 61.♔f1 ♖b8 62.♖h7+ ♔e6 63.♔g2 ♖f8 64.♔f1 ♖b8 65.♗b7 ♖e8 66.♔e2 ♖e7 67.♖h6+ ♔e5 68.♗e4 ♖a7 69.h3 ½-½

Kasparov,Garry
Shirov,Alexey
Novgorod 1994 (1)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♗b4 3.♘d5 ♗e7 4.d4 d6 5.e4 c6 6.♘xe7 ♕xe7 7.♘e2 f5 8.dxe5 ♕xe5 9.exf5 ♘f6 10.♕d4 ♗xf5 11.♗f4 ♕a5+ 12.♕c3 ♕xc3+ 13.♘xc3 0-0 14.0-0-0 d5 15.♗d6 ♖c8 16.f3 ♘bd7 17.g4 ♗e6 18.g5 ♘e8 19.cxd5 ♗xd5 20.♗g3 ♗e6 21.♗d3 ♘c5 22.♗c2 ♖d8 23.h4 ♗f7 24.♘e4 ♘xe4 25.fxe4 ♔f8 26.♖df1 ♔g8 27.h5 ♖d7 28.♖f2 ♘d6 29.g6 ♗e6 30.gxh7+ ♔h8 31.h6 g6 32.♖f6 ♖e8 33.♖xg6 ♘c4 34.♗e1 ♔xh7 35.♖g3 ♘e5 36.♗c3 ♗c4 37.♖g7+ 1-0

Salov,Valery
Shirov,Alexey
Amsterdam Donner Mem 1995 (4)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♗b4 3.♘d5 ♗e7 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♘xe7 ♕xe7 6.♘e2 d5 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.a3 0-0 9.♘g3 c5 10.b3 ♘c6 11.♗b2 ♗e6 12.♕c2 ♖fd8 13.♗b5 ♘a5 14.♗xe5 ♗d7 15.♗c3 ♗xb5 16.♗xa5 ♘f4 17.♗xd8 ♖xd8 18.♕c3 ♕e6 19.f3 ♖d3 20.♕xc5 ♘xg2+ 21.♔d1 ♘xe3+ 22.♔c1 b6 23.♕c7 ♖d6 24.♕b8+ ♗e8 25.♘e4 ♖c6+ 26.♘c3 ♘d5 27.♖a2 ♖c8 28.♕g3 ♘xc3 29.dxc3 ♕xb3 30.♖c2 ♗a4 31.♕f2 ♕xa3+ 32.♔b1 ♗xc2+ 33.♕xc2 ♖xc3 0-1

Azmaiparashvili,Zurab
Shirov,Alexey
Moscow ol 1994 (6)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♗b4 3.♘d5 ♗e7 4.e3 d6 5.♘e2 f5 6.g3 ♘f6 7.♗g2 c6 8.♘xe7 ♕xe7 9.b3 0-0 10.♗b2 ♗e6 11.0-0 ♘bd7 12.d3 ♗f7 13.♕d2 ♗h5 14.♖ae1 ♖ad8 15.♘c3 e4 16.f3 exd3 17.♕xd3 ♗g6 18.♕d4 ♘c5 19.♖d1 ♖fe8 20.♖fe1 h6 21.♗a3 b6 22.♗b2 ♔h7 23.♕h4 a5 24.♔f1 ♕f7 25.♗c1 f4 26.gxf4 ♘d3 27.e4 ♘xe1 28.♖xe1 ♕e7 29.f5 ♗f7 30.f4 d5 31.e5 ♕b4 32.cxd5 ♕xc3 33.d6 ♗d5 34.♗xd5 ♕d3+ 35.♔g1 cxd5 36.♗b2 ♕xf5 37.exf6 gxf6 38.♕f2 ♖xe1+ 39.♕xe1 ♖g8+ 40.♔h1 ♕d3 0-1

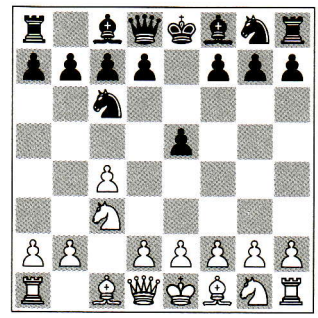
Golubovic,Boris
Sokolov,Ivan
Neum tt 2004 (6)

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 ♗c5 4.♘c3 0-0 5.e3 d6 6.♘ge2 c6 7.d4 ♗b6 8.b3 ♖e8 9.h3 ♗f5 10.0-0 ♘a6

11.a3 ♘c7 12.♘a4 ♘e6 13.♔h2 ♗c7 14.♗b2 h5 15.♖c1 ♘g5 16.d5 ♕d7 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♘g1 ♖ad8 19.f4 exf4 20.exf4 ♘ge4 21.♘f3 c5 22.♘c3 d5 23.♘xe4 dxe4 24.♘e5 ♕e6 25.♕e2 ♘d7 26.♕xh5 ♘xe5 27.fxe5 ♗g6 28.♕g5 ♖d3 29.b4 ♖b3 30.♖f2 cxb4 31.axb4 ♖xb4 32.c5 ♖b3 33.♖e2 ♕a6 34.♕g4 ♗f5 35.♕xf5 ♕xe2 36.♗d4 ♖d3 37.♖f1 ♖f8 38.♖f2 ♕d1 39.♗xe4 g6 40.♕g5 ♖xg3 41.♔xg3 ♕xd4 42.♔f3 ♕xc5 43.h4 ♗d8 44.♕g4 ♗b6 45.♖e2 ♕c1 46.♖g2 ♕f1+ 47.♔g3 ♗c7 48.♔h2 ♖e8 0-1

Variations with 2...♘c6

1. c2-c4 e7-e5
2. ♘b1-c3 ♘b8-c6

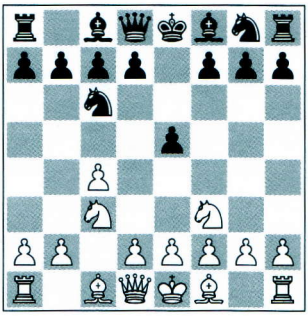


In this section we look at lines without 3...♘f6: Black keeps open the option of advancing his f-pawn two squares so as to assist his kingside initiative. You often end up playing a **Closed Sicilian** with **reversed colours**, and it is a challenge to calculate how significant being a tempo down is.

Here we discuss variations that follow White's decision to play 3.♘f3, whereas the popular 3.g3 lines will be examined in the next section.

Three Knights Variation

3. ♘g1-f3



White's strategy is to control the centre.

3. ... f7-f5

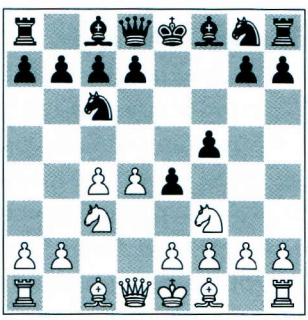
The fianchetto 3...g6 is not satisfactory here: 4.d4! exd4 5.♘xd4 ♗g7 6.♘xc6 bxc6 7.g3 ♘e7 8.♗g2 0-0 9.0-0, and White has more space and a better pawn structure.

3...♘f6 transposes to the **English Four Knights Variation**, which we will look at soon.

4. d2-d4

4.d3 is passive; with 4...♘f6 5.g3 ♗b4!? (instead of the normal fianchetto), Black has achieved great results.

4. ... e5-e4



At this point essentially two continuations need to be considered: A - 5.♗g5 and B - 5.♘g5.

White gains nothing by playing 5.d5 as Black will reply with 5...exf3, while all knight moves (except ♘h4!) are playable and fairly common.

The most original idea is 5.♘d2 ♘f6 (*5...♘xd4?! 6.♘xe4*) 6.♘db1!? so as to develop the bishop to g5, and only after this, e2-e3.

A) 5. ♗c1-g5

This move remains popular, even if White does not achieve much after:

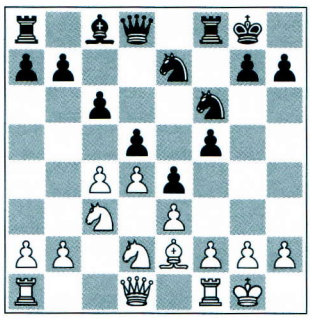
5. ... ♗f8-e7
6. ♗g5xe7 ♘c6xe7!?

Both the other two ways of recapturing are also feasible.

7. ♘f3-d2 ♘g8-f6
8. e2-e3 0-0
9. ♗f1-e2 c7-c6

9...d6 10.0-0 c5 11.♘b3 is less convincing.

10. 0-0 d7-d5



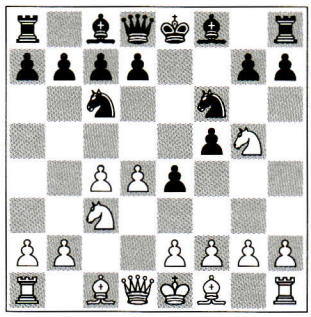
White is playing a **reverse French**. This is more favourable due to the absence of the dark-squared bishops (the c8 bishop is the problem child in the **French**).

However, in practice Black's expanded centre is not so easy to attack and his kingside initiative could become menacing.

B) 5. ♘f3-g5

As with the sister line (with d6 instead of ♘c6), this is the most popular move.

5. ... ♘g8-f6



The most natural, but also here there is a wide range of playable moves to select from. These include 5...h6 6.♘h3 g5!? 7.e3 ♘f6; 5...♗e7 6.♘h3 ♘f6 7.e3 and 5...♗b4 6.♘h3 ♘f6 7.e3. Transpositions are frequent, and in all of them the strategic concept remains unchanged: the g5 knight will return to h3 with the hope of going to f4, something which can only be stopped by the committal advance to g5. More often Black prefers to continue development, while White plays his pawn to e3, castles kingside and prepares f2-f3, to strike at the head of the pawn chain.

6. ♘g5-h3

6.e3 almost always transposes.

6. ... ♗f8-b4

Vacating the e7-square for the c6 knight. Following 6...♗e7 7.e3 0-0 8.♗e2 d6 9.0-0 ♔h8 10.f3, Black's centre starts to look shaky.

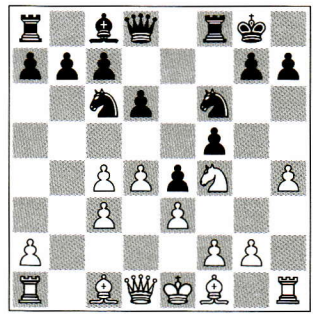
7. e2-e3

7.♗d2!? is worth a look.

7. ... ♗b4xc3+!?

Not forced, but a nice attempt to create imbalances.

8. b2xc3 d7-d6
9. ♘h3-f4 0-0
10. h2-h4



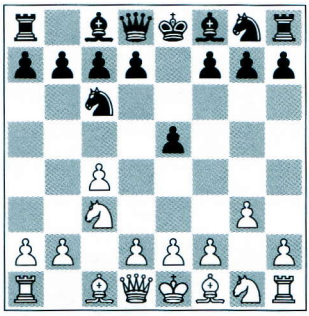
Not an easy position to assess, as reflected by the differing evaluations of the various chess engines. One thing is certain though: Black's tournament results have been acceptable.

King's Indian set-up 3

This title could cause confusion: how can one talk of a **King's Indian** when there is no pawn on d4 and the knight is sometimes absent from f6?

This is not technically a true King's Indian, but in terms of philosophy there are many similarities: Black plays ...e7-e5, establishes a kingside fianchetto, and after ...d7-d6, begins a kingside attack with ...f7-f5. Sounds familiar? It comes as no surprise that those who play the **King's Indian** against d4 are going to find this set-up appealing. It is important to note that this completes our examination of the English against the King's Indian as 1...♘f6 obviously precludes an immediate advance of the f pawn.

1. c2-c4 e7-e5
2. ♘b1-c3 ♘b8-c6
3. g2-g3



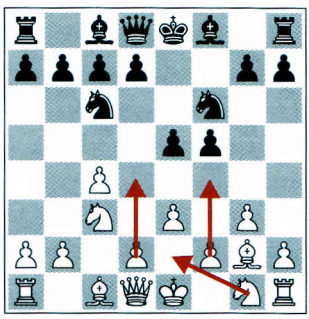
The English player's favourite. White will immediately transfer the king's bishop to its natural diagonal, unconcerned by Black's plans. Now Black can push his f-pawn, or fianchetto on the kingside in the same fashion as White in the **Closed Sicilian**.

A) 3. ... f7-f5

Along the lines of the **Grand-Prix Attack** against the **Sicilian** – 1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.f4. This committal advance is definitely playable, but given that he has a tempo less, Black would be wise to avoid the sharper lines.

4. ♗f1-g2 ♘g8-f6

5. e2-e3!



This is the most ambitious move, and it is without doubt the best as well. The king's knight will be developed to e2 and White retains the option of pushing his pawns to d3, d4 and less often f4.

The meek 5.d3 is playable but passive: following 5...♗b4 (5...♗c5 6.e3 f4!? proves to be overly aggressive compared to the sister **Sicilian** variation, as Black will quickly become aware of the tempo deficit) 6.♗d2 0-0 7.♘f3 d6 8.0-0 ♗xc3!? 9.♗xc3 ♕e8 Black's kingside initiative can start to become a threat.

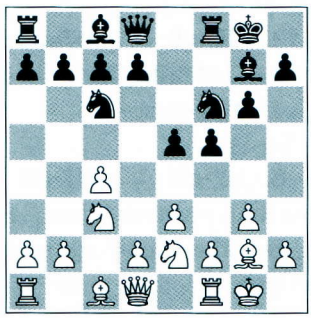
5. ... g7-g6

The most common move; with a pawn on e3, developing the bishop to c5 or b4 is less attractive.

We should also mention the paradoxical 5...d5!? (but isn't it hanging?). After 6.cxd5 ♘b4 the idea becomes clear: the threat of a check on d3 rules out 7.♕b3. For this reason it is customary to opt for 7.d3 ♘bxd5 8.♘xd5 ♘xd5 9.♘f3 ♗d6, with an acceptable position.

6. ♘g1-e2 ♗f8-g7

7. 0-0 0-0



The diagram position is often reached via 3...g6, but as its defining characteristic is the ...f7-f5 advance, we have decided to deal with it here.

A1) 8. d2-d4 d7-d6

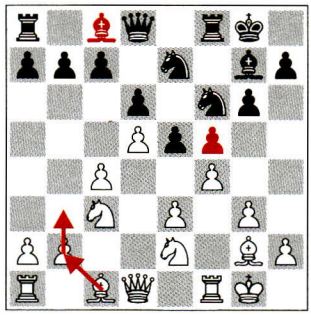
8...e4 is feasible, but exposes Black to a pawn break with 9.f3! exf3 10.♗xf3 ♖e8 11.♗d2 d6 12.♘f4, and White has an edge.

9. d4-d5

9.dxe5 produces an arid position, whereas 9.♖b1 a5 10.a3 gives both sides chances to win.

9. ... ♘c6-e7

10. f2-f4!



10. ... e5-e4

Gaining space but conceding the d4-square. Perhaps it is wiser to play the waiting move 10...♔h8.

11. b2-b3 c7-c6

Black needs space.

12. d5xc6 b7xc6

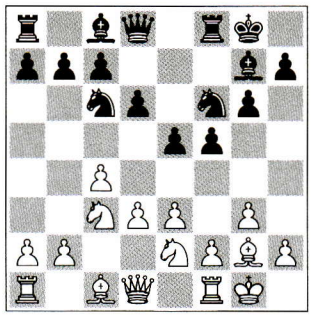
13. ♗c1-a3

White is a little better.

A2) 8. d2-d3 d7-d6

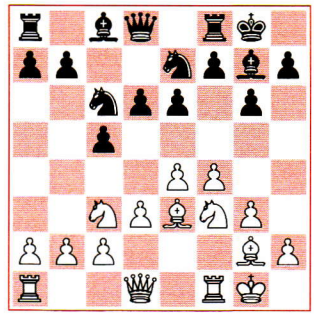
A common position that is often reached by other move sequences (often via 3...g6).

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 f5 4.♗g2 ♘f6 5.e3 g6 6.♘ge2 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 d6.



If it were Black's turn to move, with ...♗e6 we would be in the mainline of the **Closed Sicilian**, as is clear when you compare the two diagrams.

In the **Closed Sicilian**, White prepares d3-d4 with the move 9.♗e3,



which is something Black usually stops with 9...♘d4. As explained in Volume 1, now the gambit 10.e5!? – though not winning – will certainly cause Black some headaches. On the other hand, when playing against the **English**, Black is a tempo down, and there are reduced chances of opening up the centre and of a kingside initiative. However, this is a dynamically balanced position that offers Black sufficient resources.

9. ♖a1-b1

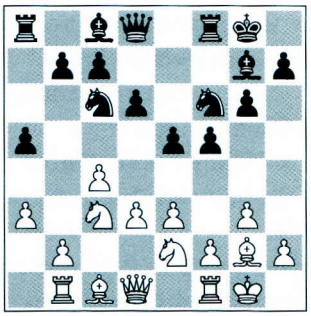
The b2-b4-b5 pawn advance, with a queenside initiative, is the dominant strategic theme in this position.

There are many who like to take a more 'prudent' approach with 9.b3 followed by 10.♗b2, copying the black systems with b6 in the **Closed Sicilian**.

9. ... a7-a5

This is easily the favourite move, but as we have noted in similar positions, allowing the a-file to be opened might not be in Black's best interests.

10. a2-a3



Now Black needs to organize a counter-attack on the kingside based on the advance ...g7-g5 (White can adequately reply to this by playing f2-f4), or otherwise shift his strategy to the centre and prepare to play ...d5 (with ...♘e7 / ...c6 / ...♗e6).

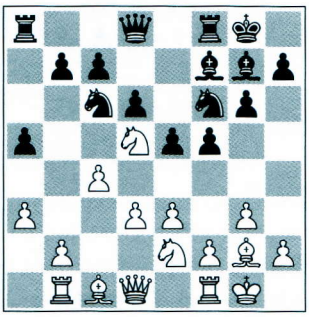
From a performance point of view, there is little difference between the two approaches. Nonetheless, the most common way to continue is with the natural ...

10. ... ♗c8-e6

11. ♘c3-d5

As with the **Closed Sicilian**, the freeing d-pawn advance should be prevented.

11. ... ♗e6-f7!?



This has more venom than the normal developing move 11...♕d7.

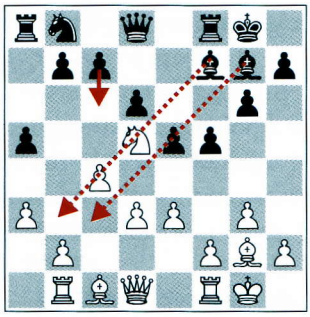
The idea is to retreat the bishop and to capture on d5 with the f6 knight, applying pressure to the d5 pawn and avoiding the pawn fork.

12. ♘e2-c3!

12.b4 gives Black a good kingside initiative after 12...axb4 13.axb4 ♘xd5! 14.cxd5 ♘e7 15.♘c3 g5, given that 16.f4?? *cannot be played as there is 16...exf4.*

12. ... ♘f6xd5

13. ♘c3xd5 ♘c6-b8!

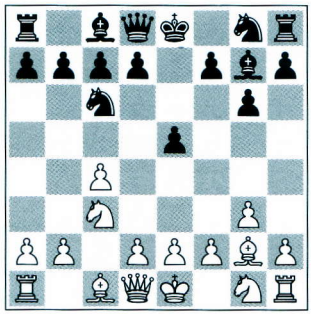


After the pawn is played to c6, Black has a reasonable game 14.b4?! *is dubious: 14...c6 15.♘c3 e4!, and Black is better.*

B) 3. ... g7-g6

In the previous section we have seen that this pawn advance (after 3.♘f3) is debatable, but things are different here now that White cannot play his pawn to d4.

4. ♗f1-g2 ♗f8-g7



We have arrived at a critical position in this line.

We noted in the section *King's Indian set-up 2*, the fluid centre allows for the following centre pawn configurations to be established: e3/d3, e3/d4, d3/e4. The first, with two centre pawns on the third rank, is the common set-up.

One can now also play 5.d3, but we will not discuss that here as it transposes to one of the following lines, depending on whether White plays e2-e3 or e2-e4.

B1) 5. ♘g1-f3

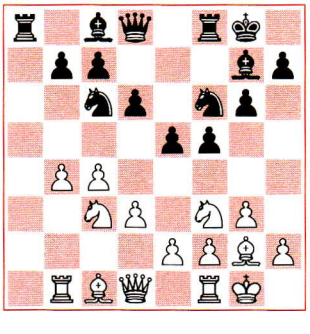
This is less popular than the other moves because, rightly or wrongly, the knight is considered more exposed to Black's advancing pawns on f3 than on e2.

5. ... d7-d6
6. 0-0 f7-f5

For the aforementioned reasons this is more logical, but an interesting alternative is 6...♗e6 7.d3 h6 with the idea of ...♕d7 and ...♗h3.

7. d2-d3 ♘g8-f6
8. ♖a1-b1 a7-a5
9. a2-a3 0-0
10. b2-b4 a5xb4
11. a3xb4

This is another key position of the **English Opening**:



What is the best way to proceed with the attack on the white king?

Some have experimented with 11...♘e7 and 11...♘h5.

The most popular and – more importantly – the best performing move is

11. ... h7-h6

which puts a stop to ♘g5 and prepares ♗e6 and a future ...g7-g5.

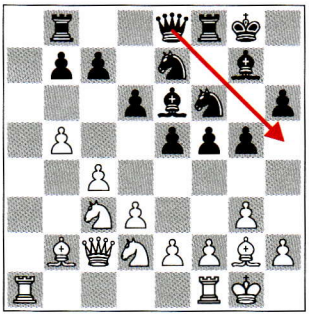
12. b4-b5 ♘c6-e7
13. ♗c1-b2

Preparing to take control of the a-file. 13.c5 and 13.♕b3 are two other possibilities that lead to complex positions.

13. ... ♗c8-e6
14. ♖b1-a1 ♖a8-b8!?

Black's ambition is to attack on the kingside, and thus he will wish to avoid simplifications; however, after 14...♕d7, the position is in fact balanced.

15. ♕d1-c2 g6-g5
16. ♘f3-d2 ♕d8-e8



and ...♕h5 is on its way, with a menacing-looking attack for Black, at least to the human eye.

However, chess engines approach the game with a disconcerting sangfroid, and in fact here they prefer White's game!

B2) 5. e2-e4

This pawn configuration was a favourite of Botvinnik's.

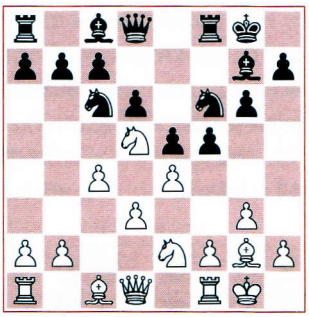
5. ... d7-d6
6. d2-d3 f7-f5

With the idea of developing the knight to f6.

6...♘f6 transposes to positions already dealt with in the section on 1.c4 ♘f6.

A frequent choice is the 'solid' 6...♘ge7 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.0-0 ♗e6 (otherwise 8...f5 9.♘d5, in the spirit of the main line) 9.♘d5 ♕d7 10.♗e3 ♘d4!? 11.♘xd4 exd4 12.♗h6 c5, with an acceptable position.

7. ♘g1-e2 ♘g8-f6
8. 0-0 0-0
9. ♘c3-d5



Another important position that occurs frequently.

White intends to play ♗g5 and ♕d2 so as to tie down Black's position, with a possible capture on f5 followed by f4. This plan is more effective than you would first imagine, which is testified to by White's optimum performance.

9. ... ♘f6xd5

This radical solution is playable. After the normal 9...♗e6 10.♗g5 ♕d7 11.♕d2 ♘h5 12.exf5! ♗xf5 (or 12...gxf5 13.f4) 13.b4, White is a little better.

10. c4xd5 ♘c6-e7
11. ♗c1-e3 c7-c6

In this position, which is highly reminiscent of the **King's Indian**, White's advantage is actually imaginary.

B3) 5. ♖a1-b1

This move would normally be considered to be a little premature... were it not for the fact that it was played by both **Kasparov** and **Karpov**!

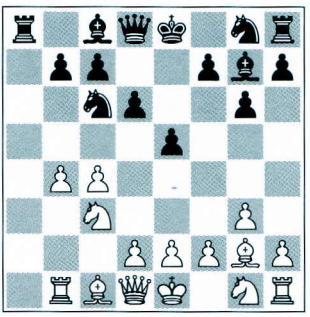
White expands on the queenside before developing on the kingside. It is worth noting that this move is usually combined with e2-e3, with a transposition to the following line.

5. ... a7-a5

In the English this advance often represents a knee-jerk reaction to ♖b1, and is not always the best.

However, in this case good performance results have shown it to be a good move.

6. a2-a3 d7-d6
7. b2-b4 a5xb4
8. a3xb4



Development is in its infancy, and both players can choose from several possible pawn configurations.

Generally, Black goes for the ...f7-f5 advance, and White opts for e2-e3 and ♘ge2.

8. ... f7-f5

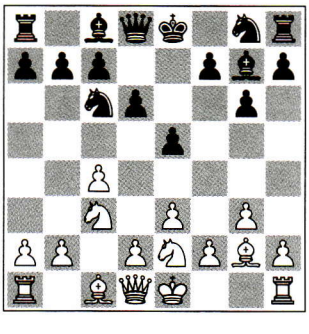
An immediate kingside attack seems to be most in keeping with the spirit of this variation.

However, another playable option is 8...♘f6 with the simple objective of finishing development as early as possible; otherwise there is 8...♘ge7 9.e3 0-0, with the plan of transferring the knight to a5 in the event of an attack with b5.

9. b4-b5 ♘c6-e7
10. e2-e3 ♘g8-f6
11. ♘g1-e2 0-0
12. 0-0 ♗c8-e6
13. d2-d3 c7-c6
14. ♕d1-b3

The dynamic equilibrium characteristic of these positions offers chances to both players: good queenside play for White will compete against Black's dangerous counterplay on the kingside.

B4) 5. e2-e3 d7-d6
6. ♘g1-e2



At this point 6...f5 transposes to previously examined lines related to 3...f5, whereas 6...♘f6 is discussed in the section *King's Indian set-up* 2. Given that 6...♗e6 would seem debatable because of 7.d4! ♗xc4 8.d5 ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 ♘b8 10.♕b5+ – with an advantage for White – there in effect remain two lines to examine:

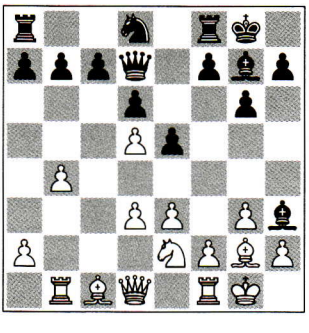
B41) 6. ... ♘g8-e7
7. 0-0 0-0
8. d2-d3 ♗c8-e6
9. ♘c3-d5

Preventing ...d6-d5.

9. ... ♕d8-d7
10. ♖a1-b1 ♘c6-d8!

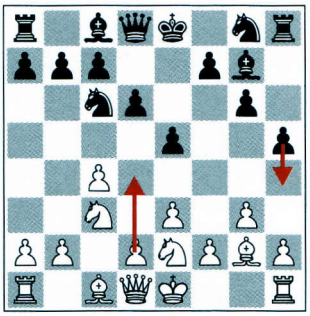
An interesting move; the alternative is the natural 10...a5 11.a3 f5, with a resulting race on opposite wings. Black would like to play ...♗h3, but he cannot do so now, as the c7 pawn will be taken. The idea behind the knight retreat is to eliminate the d5 knight, without being subject to the pawn fork that would follow an immediate capture on d5.

11. b2-b4 ♘e7xd5
12. c4xd5 ♗e6-h3



The fact that the c-file is semi-open and the c7 pawn is weak would appear to be encouraging for White, but in reality after **13.b5 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 f5**, Black has sufficient counterplay to maintain equality.

B42) 6. ... h7-h5



Not only does this have the appeal of being the most aggressive continuation, it also has the best performance.

This pawn advance is justified by the placement of the knight on e2, which has all the benefits that we have already mentioned, but with the defect that h4 and g5 are not controlled.

Black's ambition is to push the pawn further to h4, which would result in the h8 rook having free rein on the h-file, and if White plays his pawn to h4, the g5-square is not accessible to the knight which has developed to e2.

7. d2-d4

The principled reaction to pawn advances on the wing.

Obviously, a strategy of containment is also possible: 7.h3 h4 8.g4 f5 9.gxf5 ♗xf5 10.d4, with unclear play.

Another possibility is 7.h4 ♗g4 (7...♘h6!?) 8.d3 ♘ge7 9.f3 ♗e6 10.e4, with a position that is difficult to judge.

7. ... h5-h4

Although this has managed to score acceptably, a wing attack with a fluid centre looks dubious.

7...exd4 8.♘xd4 ♘ge7 is a strategically less demanding alternative.

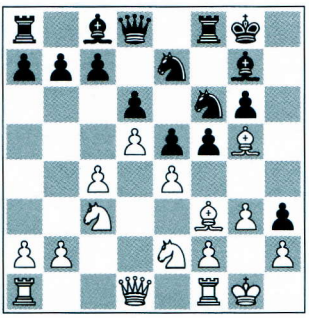
8. d4-d5

Closing the centre but gaining space.

8. ... ♘c6-e7
9. e3-e4 f7-f5
10. ♗c1-g5 h4-h3

The exchange on g3 followed by another on h1 will not help Black.

11. ♗g2-f3 ♘g8-f6
12. 0-0 0-0



This position immediately brings the **King's Indian** to mind. White seems to have slightly better prospects.

Kovalevskaya,Ekaterina
Skripchenko,Almira
Sochi tt 2006 (6)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 f5 4.d4 e4 5.♘g5 ♘f6 6.e3 d6 7.♗e2 g6 8.h4 h6 9.♘h3 ♘e7 10.♘f4 c6 11.b3 ♗g7 12.♕c2 0-0 13.♗b2 ♗d7 14.0-0-0 b5 15.♔b1 ♕b8 16.f3 a5 17.cxb5 cxb5 18.g4 ♖c8 19.g5 hxg5 20.hxg5 ♘fd5 21.♘cxd5 ♖xc2 22.♘xe7+ ♔f7 23.♔xc2 ♔xe7 24.♖h7 ♔f7 25.d5 ♕c7+ 26.♔b1 ♖g8 27.fxe4 ♕c8 28.♖c1 ♕d8 29.♘e6 ♗xe6 30.dxe6+ ♔xe6 31.♗xg7 ♕xg5 32.♗xb5 fxe4 33.♗d7+ ♔d5 34.♖d1+ ♔c5 35.♗d4+ ♔b4 36.♖h2 ♕e7 37.♗a4 ♔a3 38.♗b2+ ♔b4 39.♖c2 1-0

Ivanchuk,Vasily
Ljubojevic,Ljubomir
Linares 1995 (8)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 f5 4.d4 e4 5.♘g5 ♘f6 6.♘h3 ♗b4 7.e3 ♘e7 8.♗d2 ♗xc3 9.♗xc3 d5 10.♘f4 c6 11.b3 ♘g6 12.♗e2 ♘xf4 13.exf4 e3 14.f3 ♘h5 15.♕d3 ♕h4+ 16.g3 ♘xg3 17.♕xe3+ ♘e4+ 18.♔f1 ♕h3+ 19.♔g1 g5 20.fxg5 ♖g8 21.♗f1 ♕h4 22.♗e1 ♕xg5+ 23.♕xg5 ♘xg5 24.♔f2 f4 25.h4 ♘e6 26.♗c3 ♔f7 27.♗d3 ♖g7 28.♖ae1 ♗d7 29.♖e5 ♖ag8 30.♖h2 ♖g3 31.cxd5 cxd5 32.♗xh7 ♖xf3+ 33.♔xf3 ♖g3+ 34.♔f2 ♖xc3 35.♖g2 ♘xd4 36.♖xd5 1-0

Kortchnoi,Viktor
Nikolic,Predrag
Wijk aan Zee 1997 (1)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 f5 4.d4 e4 5.♘g5 ♘f6 6.e3 h6 7.♘h3 g5 8.f3 exf3 9.♕xf3 d6 10.♘f2 ♕e7 11.♕e2 ♗g7 12.h4 ♕f7 13.hxg5 hxg5 14.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 15.♘h3 ♕g6 16.♘d5 ♘xd5 17.cxd5 ♘e7 18.♕c4 c6 19.dxc6 bxc6 20.♗d2 ♗e6 21.♕a4 ♕h5 22.♗c4 ♕h4+ 23.♘f2 d5 24.♗e2 ♗f6 25.♖c1 ♔f7 26.♖c3 g4 27.♗f1 a5 28.♖b3 ♕h2 29.♘d3 ♕g1 30.♔e2 g3 31.♖b7 f4 32.exf4 ♗g4+ 33.♔e1 ♖h8 0-1

Ivanchuk,Vasily
Yusupov,Artur
Brussels match 1991 (9)

1.c4 e5 2.g3 d6 3.♗g2 g6 4.d4 ♘d7 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♘f3 ♘gf6 7.0-0 0-0 8.♕c2 ♖e8 9.♖d1 c6 10.b3 ♕e7 11.♗a3 e4 12.♘g5 e3 13.f4 ♘f8 14.b4 ♗f5 15.♕b3 h6 16.♘f3 ♘g4 17.b5 g5 18.bxc6 bxc6 19.♘e5 gxf4 20.♘xc6 ♕g5 21.♗xd6 ♘g6 22.♘d5 ♕h5 23.h4 ♘xh4 24.gxh4 ♕xh4 25.♘de7+ ♔h8 26.♘xf5 ♕h2+ 27.♔f1 ♖e6 28.♕b7 ♖g6 29.♕xa8+ ♔h7 30.♕g8+ ♔xg8 31.♘ce7+ ♔h7 32.♘xg6 fxg6 33.♘xg7 ♘f2 34.♗xf4 ♕xf4 35.♘e6 ♕h2 36.♖db1 ♘h3 37.♖b7+ ♔h8 38.♖b8+ ♕xb8 39.♗xh3 ♕g3 0-1

Timofeev,Artyom
Kharlov,Andrey
Kazan 2001 (6)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 f5 4.♗g2 ♘f6 5.e3 g6 6.♘ge2 ♗g7 7.d3 d6 8.♖b1 a5 9.a3 0-0 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 ♘e7 12.0-0 g5 13.f4 gxf4 14.exf4 c6 15.♔h1 ♗e6 16.♗e3 ♘g4 17.♗g1 ♖f6 18.b5 ♖h6 19.bxc6 bxc6 20.♕d2 e4 21.dxe4 ♗xc4 22.♗f3 ♕a5 23.♖a1 ♕xa1 24.♖xa1 ♖xa1 25.♔g2 ♖xg1+ 26.♔xg1 ♘xh2 27.♗g2 fxe4 28.♘xe4 ♗xe2 29.♕xe2 ♗d4+ 30.♘f2 ♔f8 31.♗e4 d5 32.♗c2 ♘g8 33.♗f5 ♘f6 34.♔g2 ♗xf2 35.♕xf2 ♖h5 36.♕c5+ ♔f7 37.♕a7+ ♔e8 1-0

Gurevich,Mikhail
Nijboer,Friso
Kusadasi Ech pff 2006 (2)

1.c4 f5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.d3 0-0 6.e3 e5 7.♘ge2 d6 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.♖b1 ♗e6 10.♘d5 ♖b8 11.b4 ♘e7 12.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 13.♗b2 a6 14.a4 c6 15.♕d2 d5 16.♕c2 b5 17.axb5 axb5 18.cxb5 cxb5 19.♖fc1 ♖c8 20.♕d2 ♕d6 21.f4 h5 22.♗xe5 ♗xe5 23.fxe5 ♕xe5 24.d4 ♕f6 25.♖c5 ♖b8 26.♘f4 ♗f7 27.♖a1 h4 28.♕f2 hxg3 29.♕xg3 ♖a8 30.♖xa8

♖xa8 31.h4 ♖a1+ 32.♔h2 ♖a2 33.♖xb5 ♗e8 34.♖b8 ♔f7 35.♕g5 ♕xg5 36.hxg5 ♖a3 37.♖b7 ♗c6 38.♖c7 ♗a8 39.♗xd5+ ♔e8 40.♗xa8 ♖xa8 41.b5 ♖b8 42.♖c5 ♔d7 43.♔g3 ♔d6 44.♔f3 ♖a8 45.♖e5 ♖a3 46.♖e6+ ♔d7 47.♖f6 ♖c3 48.♖f7 1-0

Ivanchuk,Vasily
Topalov,Veselin
Wijk aan Zee 1996 (13)

1.g3 e5 2.c4 ♘c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 f5 6.0-0 d6 7.♖b1 a5 8.a3 ♘f6 9.d3 0-0 10.b4 axb4 11.axb4 h6 12.b5 ♘e7 13.♗b2 ♗e6 14.♖a1 ♖c8 15.c5 ♘d7 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.♘a4 d5 18.♘d2 ♕e8 19.e3 g5 20.♕e2 ♕f7 21.f4 ♘g6 22.fxe5 ♘dxe5 23.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 24.♗xf3 ♗xb2 25.♕xb2 f4 26.♗g2 ♕e7 27.♘b6 ♖cd8 28.♕d4 ♕d6 29.exf4 gxf4 30.♖ae1 ♔h7 31.♔h1 ♗g8 32.♖f3 fxg3 33.♖xg3 ♖f4 34.♕e3 ♖df8 35.♖g1 d4 36.♕d2 ♘e5 37.♗e4+ ♖xe4 38.dxe4 ♘f3 39.♖xf3 ♖xf3 40.♕g2 1-0

Botvinnik,Mikhail
Spassky,Boris
Oegstgeest/Leiden 1970 (3)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.d3 ♘ge7 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.0-0 ♗d7 9.♘d5 ♖b8 10.♗g5 f6 11.♗e3 f5 12.♕d2 ♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♘d4 14.♘xd4 exd4 15.♗g5 ♕c8 16.♖ac1 ♖f7 17.♗h6 ♗xh6 18.♕xh6 ♗b5 19.♖fd1 c5 20.dxc6 bxc6 21.b3 c5 22.e5 ♕e6 23.exd6 ♕xd6 24.♕f4 ♕xf4 25.gxf4 ♖c7 26.♗d5+ ♔f8 27.♗c4 a5 28.♗xb5 ♖xb5 29.♖c4 ♖b4 ½-½

Larsen,Bent
Ivkov,Borislav
Sousse izt 1967 (22)

1.g3 e5 2.♗g2 d6 3.e4 ♘c6 4.♘e2 f5 5.d3 g6 6.c4 ♗g7 7.♘bc3 ♘f6 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘d5 ♘h5 10.♗e3 ♗e6 11.♕d2 ♕d7 12.♖ad1 ♖ae8 13.b3 ♘d4 14.♗xd4 exd4 15.♕b2 ♗e5 16.♕d2 c6 17.f4 ♗g7 18.♘b4 a5 19.♘c2 c5 20.a4 fxe4 21.dxe4 ♗h3 22.♘c1 ♗xg2 23.♕xg2 ♕c6 24.♖de1 ♘f6 25.e5 ♕xg2+ 26.♔xg2 dxe5 27.♖xe5 ♖xe5 28.fxe5 ♘d7 29.e6 ♘e5 30.♘e1 ♘g4 31.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 32.♘cd3 ♔g7 33.♘f2 ♘e3+ 34.♔f3 ♘f1 35.♘e4 ♘xh2+ 36.♔f4 h5 37.♘d3 b6 38.♔e5 ♘f3+ 39.♔d5 g5 40.♔c6 h4 41.♔xb6 h3 42.♔xa5 h2 43.♘ef2 ♗d6 44.♘h1 ♘e5 45.♘df2 d3 46.♘e4 ♗c7+ 47.♔b5 ♘f3 48.♔c6 ♗a5 49.e7 ♔f7 50.♘xg5+ ♔xe7 51.♘xf3 d2 52.♘xd2 ♗xd2 53.♔xc5 ♔e6 54.♔d4 ♔f5 55.c5 ♗a5 56.c6 ♗b6+ 57.♔d5 1-0

Karpov,Anatoly
Ljubojevic,Ljubomir
Bugojno 1986 (5)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.♖b1 ♘f6 6.e3 0-0 7.♘ge2 d6 8.b4 ♗e6 9.b5 ♘a5 10.d3 a6 11.a4 axb5 12.axb5 d5 13.cxd5 ♘xd5 14.0-0 ♘xc3 15.♘xc3 ♕d7 16.♕c2 ♖fd8 17.♖d1 ♗g4 18.♖d2 ♗h3 19.♗h1 ♖ab8 20.♘d5 c6 21.♘b6 ♕c7 22.♘a4 b6 23.bxc6 ♖dc8 24.♕d1 ♘xc6 25.♖c2 ♗d7 26.♖cb2 b5 27.♘c5 ♕d6 28.♘xd7 ♕xd7 29.♖xb5 ♖xb5 30.♖xb5 ♘d4 31.♖b2 ♘e6 32.♖d2 h5 33.♗g2 ♖d8 34.♗a3 ♗f8 35.♗b2 ♗g7

36.♕b3 ♔h7 37.h4 ♕c7 38.♔h2 ♔g8 39.♗h3 ♖d6 40.♖c2 ♕d7 41.♖c3 ♔h7 42.♕c4 ♖b6 43.♗a3 ♕a7 44.♗g2 ♖a6 45.♗b2 ♖a4 46.♕b3 ♖a5 47.♖c6 ♖a6 48.♕c4 ♖a4 49.♕b5 ♖a5 50.♕b3 ♕d7 51.♕c4 ♘d8 52.♖c7 ♕f5 53.♔g1 ♘e6 54.♗e4 ♕f6 55.♖c6 ♕d8 56.♗c3 ♖a3 57.♕b5 ♕d7 58.♗xe5 ♗xe5 59.♕xe5 ♖xd3 60.♕xh5+ ♔g8 61.♕e5 ♖d1+ 62.♔g2 ♖d2 63.h5 gxh5 64.♕xh5 ♖d6 65.♖c8+ ♘d8 66.♖a8 ♔f8 67.♕h8+ ♔e7 68.♕h4+ ♔e8 69.♕g5 ♔f8 70.♗f3 ♕e7 71.♕h5 ♕f6 72.♗d5 ♔g7 73.e4 ♕g6 74.♕e5+ ♕f6 75.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 76.f4 ♖d7 77.♔f3 ♔e7 78.♔g4 ♖c7 79.♔f5 ♖d7 80.g4 ♖d6 81.g5 ♘c6 82.♗xc6 ♖xc6 83.e5 ♖b6 84.♖g8 ♖b4 85.g6 fxg6+ 86.♖xg6 1-0

Sunye Neto,Jaime
Nunn,John

Amsterdam OHRA 1985 (10)

1.c4 g6 2.♘c3 ♗g7 3.g3 e5 4.♗g2 d6 5.e3 ♘c6 6.♘ge2 h5 7.h4 ♗g4 8.d3 ♘ge7 9.b4 a6 10.♖b1 ♖b8 11.♕c2 0-0 12.♗d2 ♕d7 13.♘d5 b5 14.a4 e4 15.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 16.♗xe4 ♘e5 17.cxb5 axb5 18.axb5 d5 19.♗g2 ♘f3+ 20.♔f1 ♖xb5 21.♘g1 ♘xd2+ 22.♕xd2 ♖fb8 23.d4 c5 24.dxc5 ♕xc5 25.♗f3 ♖xb4 26.♖xb4 ♖xb4 27.♕xd5 ♖b1+ 28.♔g2 ♕c1 29.♔h2 ♕f1 30.♗g2 ♕xf2 31.♘h3 ♖xh1+ 32.♔xh1 ♗xh3 33.♗xh3 ♕xg3 0-1

Kortchnoi,Viktor
Short,Nigel David

Rotterdam Euwe-mem 1990 (3)

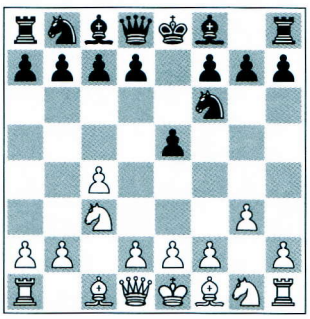
1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.e3 d6 6.♘ge2 h5 7.d4 h4 8.d5 ♘ce7 9.e4 f5 10.♘g1 ♘f6 11.♗g5 hxg3 12.hxg3 ♖xh1 13.♗xh1 ♔f7 14.♕e2 ♕h8 15.♗g2 ♗d7 16.0-0-0 ♕h5 17.♕xh5 ♘xh5 18.♘h3 ♖h8 19.♖h1 ♗f6 20.♗d2 ♔g7 21.♘b5 fxe4 22.♘c3 ♘g8 23.♘xe4 ♗e7 24.♘hg5 ♘gf6 25.♘e6+ ♗xe6 26.dxe6 c6 27.♘g5 ♖e8 28.♗f3 ♗f8 29.♗xh5 gxh5 30.f4 exf4 31.gxf4 ♔g6 32.♘f3 ♘e4 33.♗e3 c5 34.♘h4+ ♔f6 35.f5 ♗e7 36.♖f1 ♔g7 37.♖g1+ ♔f6 38.♗f4 ♗d8 39.♔c2 a6 40.♖g2 1-0

Two Knights Variation

As we will see later, after **1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6**, White often continues with 3.♘f3, which has the merit of 'forcing' Black to play ...♘c6, limiting his future options (for example, plans with ...c6 and ...d5).

But it is not rare for White to ignore this subtlety and immediately set about establishing a fianchetto with 3.g3.

1. c2-c4 e7-e5
2. ♘b1-c3 ♘g8-f6
3. g2-g3



At this stage of the game, Black can delay the development of the second knight that characterizes this variation.

If that is the case, you will frequently transpose: for example, the **4.g3 Variation**, which we will look at soon, or the **Keres Variation** (3...c6), which is examined in the section on 1.c4 e5 2.g3.

Here we will look at non-transposing lines, remembering that with the knight on c3, delaying the development of the companion knight has both positive and negative features, as is always the case in the opening phase of the game.

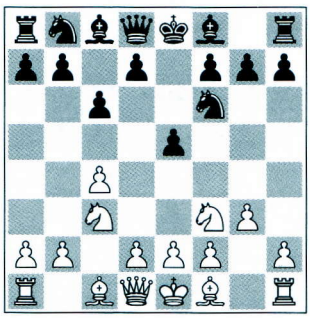
A) 3. ... d7-d5
4. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5
5. ♗f1-g2 ♘d5-b6

Now White has nothing better on offer than **6.♘f3**, going into the **Four Knights Variation** after 6...♘c6.

B) 3. ... c7-c6

As with the previously discussed **Keres Variation**, Black's aim is occupation of the centre.

4. ♘g1-f3



The most popular reaction by Black when White adopts the **Alapin Variation** to fight the **Sicilian** is to beckon the e-pawn further forward – 1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 – , so it is only natural that White, with the advantage of an extra tempo, will frequently employ the same strategy.

The alternative 4.♗g2 d5 has given Black excellent results, while 4.d4 exd4 5.♕xd4 d5 6.♗g2 transposes to Variation C22, which is examined on page 150.

4. ... e5-e4
5. ♘f3-d4 d7-d5
6. c4xd5

Now one of the pluses of having the knight on c3 instead of the bishop on g2, is that Black cannot play 6...♕xd5,

which is optimum in the sister variation (see the diagram on page 149).

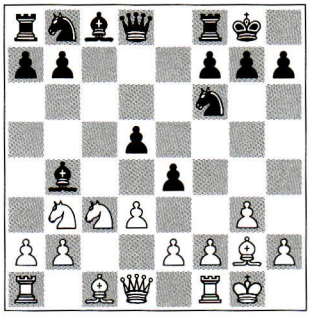
6. ... c6xd5

For the courageous, there is 6...♕b6!?, whose extreme consequences after 7.♘b3 a5! 8.d3 a4 9.♘d2 cxd5 10.♗g2 have yet to be fully assessed.

7. d2-d3 ♗f8-c5
8. ♘d4-b3 ♗c5-b4
9. ♗f1-g2

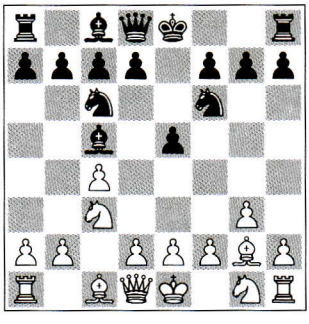
It is worthwhile to consider 9.dxe4 ♘xe4 10.♗d2.

9. ... 0-0
10. 0-0



Now there is the eternal question of the opening phase: are these centre pawns an asset, or are they in fact a liability?

C) 3. ... ♘b8-c6
4. ♗f1-g2 ♗f8-c5!?



In the past c5 was considered a dubious destination for the bishop, in as much as it favoured a d2-d4 advance, but recent tournament results have shown this concern to be unwarranted.

4...♗b4 is playable, even if after 5.♘d5 White has an edge. This is because compared to the ♘f3 Variation, Black does not have the resource of advancing his e-pawn to e4.

5. a2-a3

Following 5.e3 the sacrifice 5...d5!? has proved to be promising: 6.cxd5 ♘b4, along the lines of the gambit discussed on page 163 (here ...♗c5 is played instead of ...f5).

5. ... a7-a6
6. e2-e3 0-0
7. ♘g1-e2 d7-d6
8. 0-0 ♗c5-a7
9. d2-d4

The alternative 9.d3 is less committal.

9. ... e5xd4
10. e3xd4 h7-h6

with an acceptable position for Black.

D) 3. ... ♗f8-b4

A promising move; as Black has not yet developed his knight to c6, he has one or two extra options compared to the corresponding line in the **English Four Knights**.

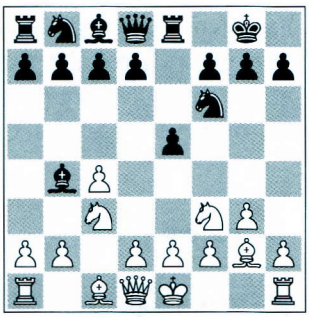
4. ♗f1-g2 0-0

An interesting idea is to concede the bishop with 4...♗xc3 so as to compromise White's pawn structure in a similar way to the **Shirov Variation**. However, as we have already noted, in this case you generally prefer to avoid putting the knight on f6 so that your f-pawn is free to advance.

5. ♘g1-f3

Without a knight on c6, 5.♘d5 is not going to gain anything for White after 5...♘xd5 6.cxd5 c6. A relatively popular option is 5.e4!? ♗xc3 and now you can recapture with either pawn. The resulting positions are strategically complex and are reminiscent of the **Rossolimo Variation of the Sicilian**. In that line after 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 g6 4.♗xc6!? both pawn recaptures are playable and Black often gets in the ...e7-e5 advance.

5. ... ♖f8-e8!



The truly excellent results that have been achieved with this move justify the exclamation mark. Black will wait for the most opportune moment to push his pawn to e4.

5...♘c6 transposes to the **Four Knights** line.

6. 0-0 e5-e4

7. ♘f3-g5

Also 7.♘d4 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 d6 9.♘c2 ♘bd7 10.♘e3 b6 11.♘d5 ♗b7 does not leave White with anything special.

7. ... ♗b4xc3

Forced.

8. d2xc3

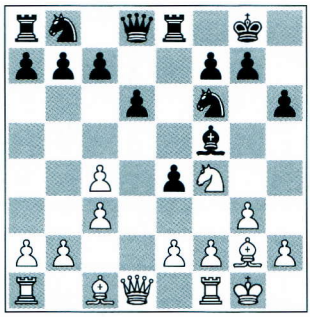
Recapturing with this pawn gives White better control of the centre squares, though at the cost of losing the opportunity to make a d2-d3 pawn break.

On the other hand, after 8.bxc3 h6 9.♘h3 b6 10.f3 ♗b7, Black does not have any problems.

8. ... h7-h6

9. ♘g5-h3 d7-d6

10. ♘h3-f4 ♗c8-f5



Things are pretty even: Black's advanced e4 pawn is *overprotected* and lays the foundation for a kingside initiative, but White has the two bishops, whose power could well be felt as the game proceeds.

Four Knights Variation

3. ♘g1-f3

Now Black almost always defends e5 by developing the knight to c6.

Before we explore the intricacies of the main line, we should point out that the solid but passive **3...d6** leads into the **Old Indian** after **4.d4** (Vol. 2).

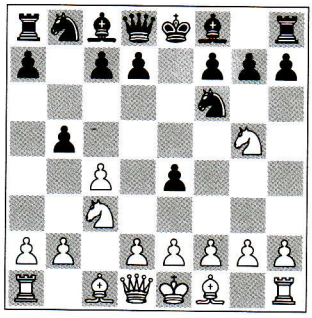
3. ... e5-e4?!

This audacious move is probably of doubtful merit, but it is nonetheless of interest. It had a certain degree of popularity in the 1970's, in part due to its surprise effect (without the Internet, the surprise value of new moves lasted longer!).

4. ♘f3-g5

Now Black has problems saving his e4 pawn. What is the best way to meet this threat?

4. ... b7-b5!



This was the brainwave of Spanish grandmaster Bellon Lopez. For better or worse, the plan is to occupy the centre with ...d7-d5 (after 5.cxb5) or with ...c7-c6 followed by ...d7-d5 after 5.♘xb5.

However, when the merit of the paradoxical

5. d2-d3!

was appreciated, this gambit became a rarity in tournament play. The idea is to capture on b5 after Black has given up centre control with

5. ... e4xd3

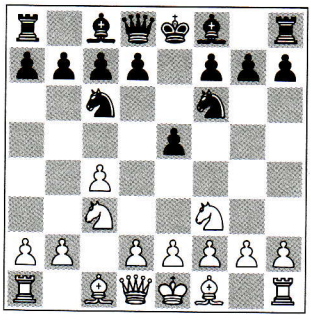
5...bxc4 6.dxe4 has also shown itself to be advantageous for White.

6. c4xb5! h7-h6
7. ♘g5-f3 d3xe2
8. ♗f1xe2

White enjoys a significant lead in development, and all the chess engines give him a clear plus.

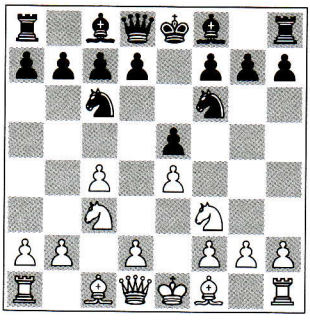
Now, **3...♘c6** takes us into what is considered to be the **English 1...e5** main line.

1. c2-c4 e7-e5
2. ♘b1-c3 ♘g8-f6
3. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6



White has plenty of playable alternatives. Here we will restrict ourselves to the minor lines, whereas the **4.g3** variations deserve a section of their own.

A) 4. e2-e4



Nimzowitsch's choice: White is unconcerned about creating a weak square on d4 and prepares a future f2-f4 advance. This move may be aesthetically unappealing, but it is more dangerous than it looks, and an unprepared black player can find himself in unexpected difficulty.

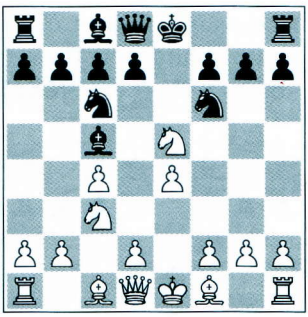
At this point, the solid 4...d6 5.d4 ♗g4 6.d5 ♘d4 7.♗e3 has not scored satis-

factorily, and thus Black usually makes a choice from one of the following two options:

A1) 4. ... ♗f8-c5

The most natural move. Once it was considered dubious because of what were considered to be good tactical opportunities, but in fact it is more complex than that, and today it is considered an optimum choice for producing unbalanced positions that offer both sides chances.

5. ♘f3xe5!



Without this move, White does not have compensation for the weakness on d4.

5. ... ♘c6xe5

The 'Romantic' 5...0-0!? is also worth considering.

6. d2-d4

With the fork White wins back the piece.

6. ... ♗c5-b4

And in turn Black wins back his pawn.

7. d4xe5 ♘f6xe4

8. ♕d1-d4

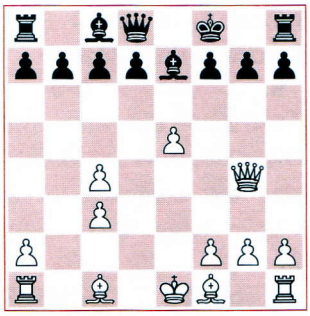
The most active square for the queen.

8. ... ♘e4xc3

8...♘c5!? is probably playable too.

9. b2xc3 ♗b4-e7

10. ♕d4-g4 ♔e8-f8



Unfazed by the prospect of 11.♗h6, the chess engines choose 10...g6.

A human player would be much more concerned about the consequences of this move. It is hard to know whether our silicon friends underestimate the danger, or if we overestimate it.

After the 'human' repositioning of the king, the position is complex and the same computer programs disagree in their assessment, ranging from equality to a clear advantage for White.

In effect, the placement of the king is not ideal, and Black only has control of his first rank. However, it is important to remember that all the knights are off the board, and White would not look forward to the endgame as his pawn structure is a mess.

As is so often the case, an evaluation of 'unclear' is not the sign of a lazy annotator, but quite simply the only prudent judgement that can be made.

A2) 4. ... ♗f8-b4

The most solid; the attack on e4 forces White to play the passive d2-d3 advance

5. d2-d3 d7-d6

6. ♗f1-e2

Recently this has become more popular than the standard 6.g3; after 6...0-0

7.♗g2 ♘e8 8.0-0 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 f5, Black has a more fluid game.

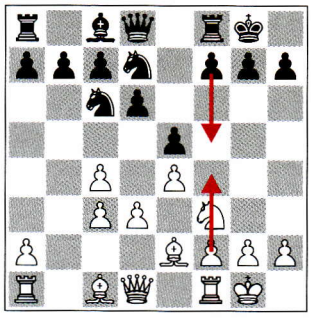
6. ... 0-0

6...h6 7.0-0 ♗c5!? also has promise.

7. 0-0 ♗b4xc3!

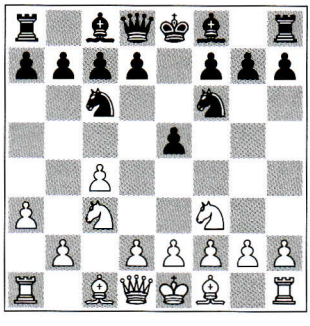
Conceding the advantage of the two bishops in exchange for a better pawn structure.

8. b2xc3 ♘f6-d7!?



with a dynamically balanced position: White will prepare to play f2-f4, but also Black plans to make his own advance ...f7-f5.

B) 4. a2-a3



Somewhat provocative: White makes a useful waiting move, inviting his adversary to play his pawn to d5.

4. ... d7-d5

Black accepts the challenge.

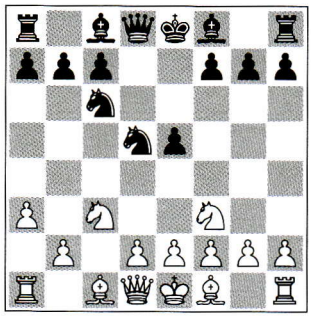
He could also continue with 4...g6, with a likely transposition to one of the previously discussed **English against the King's Indian** lines.

4...e4!? is played surprisingly little, given that it performs so well. It would seem justified given White's quiet pawn move: after 5.♘g5 ♕e7 6.d3 exd3 7.♕xd3 (7.e4!? merits attention) 7...♘e5 8.♕c2 c6, Black has a reasonable position: it is true that the queen on e7 blocks the path of the f8 bishop, but this piece can also be developed in fianchetto.

5. c4xd5

5.d4 exd4 6.♘xd4 ♘xd4 7.♕xd4 c5! does not give White more than equality.

5. ... ♘f6xd5



We are in an **Open Sicilian** with an extra tempo, which is not a minor detail in such a combative opening. However, as when fighting against the **reverse Dragon**, which we will examine later, Black prefers to sidestep the sharpest lines with the hope of obtaining a reasonable game.

6. ♕d1-c2

Obviously, as with the **Sicilian**, many other options are available, e.g. 6.d3, 6.e3 or 6.e4.

6. ... ♗f8-e7

Not the only move, but as we mentioned, Black is looking for solidity.

7. e2-e3 a7-a6

Black does not like the idea of ♗b5.

8. ♘c3xd5 ♕d8xd5

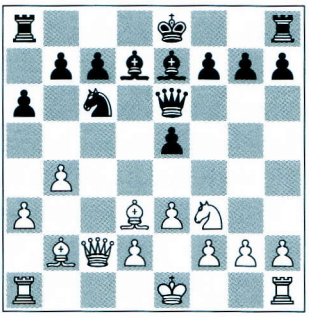
9. ♗f1-d3!?

Preventing Black from castling and threatening 10.♗e4.

9. ... ♗c8-d7

10. b2-b4 ♕d5-e6

11. ♗c1-b2



White's position inspires more confidence, considering that Black cannot castle kingside and that an ...f7-f5 advance would gravely weaken the a2-g8 diagonal.

C) 4. d2-d3

Also here White is happy to play a reverse **Open Sicilian** after 4...d5, but usually Black denies him that option and plays 4...g6, transposing to other lines, or otherwise:

4. ... ♗f8-b4

Now 5.e4 takes us into Variation A. However, White generally avoids the doubled pawns by playing:

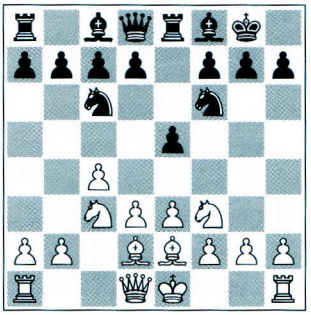
5. ♗c1-d2 0-0

6. e2-e3

After 6.g3 ♖e8 7.♗g2 ♗xc3!? 8.♗xc3 d5 9.cxd5 ♘xd5, it is problematic to exploit the power of the bishop pair.

6. ... ♖f8-e8

7. ♗f1-e2 ♗b4-f8!?

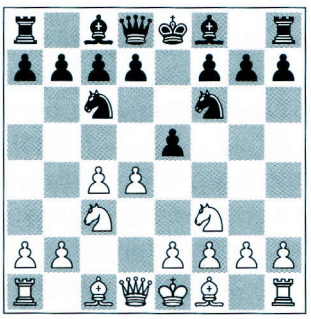


A curious move: Black is no longer prepared to concede the bishop, and before advancing in the centre he avoids possible exchanges.

8. 0-0 d7-d6

with equality.

D) 4. d2-d4



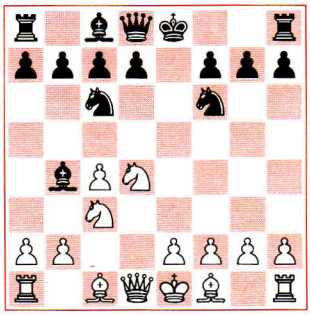
A principled move, which was frequently employed by Botvinnik. White occupies the centre, but Black's active pieces will not allow him to maintain it: today the text move is considered to be tame and is rarely seen in top level games.

4. ... e5xd4

4...d6 is too passive.

4...e4 has never been popular, despite the fact that after 5.♘d2 ♗b4 6.e3 ♗xc3! 7.bxc3 d6 8.♗e2 0-0, it has scored more than satisfactorily.

5. ♘f3xd4 ♗f8-b4!



And White has a problem: the e2-e4 advance is no longer on and Black's pieces control the central squares.

5...♗c5 is not very effective as there is 6.♘xc6!.

6. ♗c1-g5

6.g3 is natural enough, but Black has few problems after 6...♘e4 7.♕d3 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 ♕f6!?.

6.♘xc6 does not make progress: after 6...♗xc3+! 7.bxc3, both recaptures on c6 leave Black with a reasonable game.

6. ... h7-h6!

On h4 the bishop is worse than on g5: it can no longer defend the queenside and is subject to attack with moves like ...♘g6.

7. ♗g5-h4 ♗b4xc3+

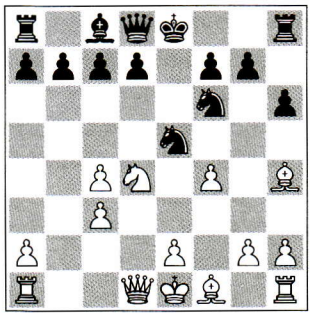
Not forced, but definitely the most played: Black must weaken White's pawn structure before he can play ♖c1. This naturally produces a risky weakness on the dark squares, and a more conservative player could prefer 7...0-0 8.♖c1 ♘e5 9.e3 ♘g6, with a decent position.

8. b2xc3 ♘c6-e5

The number 1 choice; the knight goes to the defence of the kingside.

The normal 8...d6 and 8...0-0 are probably playable alternatives.

9. f2-f4



The most energetic; the more restrained 9.e3 d6 10.♗e2 ♘g6 11.♗g3 ♘e4 12.♕c2 ♕e7! has allowed Black to score well.

The diagram position is a good example of the eternal contest between dynamic and static factors. White must act quickly before Black consolidates his position in the knowledge that his better pawn structure represents a long-term plus.

9. ... ♘e5-g6

9...♘xc4? is a mistake: 10.e4 ♘b6 11.e5, and White is clearly better.

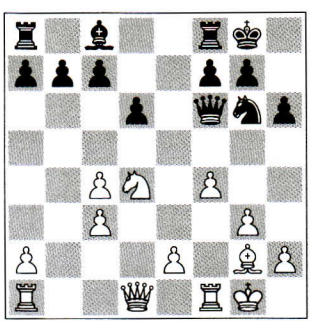
10. ♗h4xf6 ♕d8xf6

11. g2-g3 0-0

There is also the interesting knight manoeuvre 11...♘f8!? 12.♗g2 ♘e6 and then ...♘c5.

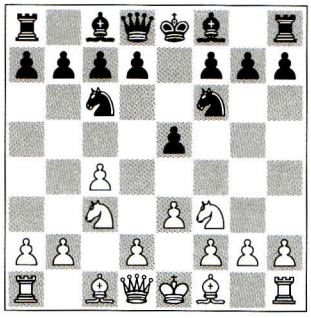
12. ♗f1-g2 d7-d6

13. 0-0



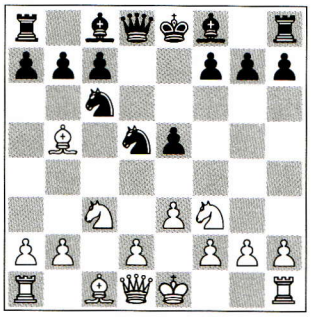
Another position that frustrates evaluation: at first glance, it would seem that without both bishops White does not have enough compensation for the doubled pawns. However, in reality White has good control over the centre squares and more actively placed pieces, and therefore the position is pretty much in dynamic equipoise.

E) 4. e2-e3



This move is second in popularity to the kingside fianchetto. It is a logical move (preparing d2-d4) that has the merit of rendering Black's ...d7-d5 advance dubious, whereas in all the other lines it is effective.

Following 4...d5?!, there is 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗b5!.



Compared to the analogous **Sicilian** line (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♗b4) where White responds effectively with 6.e5!, here the extra tempo makes all the difference: the c3 knight prevents 6...e4, and White's centre stays solid.

For Black to defend e5 he must take on c3, reinforcing White's centre, and even if contemporary chess engines struggle to see White's advantage, this line's almost 70% performance says it all.

4...d6 and 4...g6 are rarely seen as they grant White a slightly better centre after 5.d4. Two continuations remain to be examined:

E1) 4. ... ♗f8-e7

The less complex of the two: played as far back as the 19th Century (!), it only became popular as a result of Karpov's brilliant victory over Timman in 1979.

5. d2-d4

Some prefer the more prudent 5.a3 d5 6.cxd5, transposing to Variation B.

5. ... e5xd4

6. ♘f3xd4

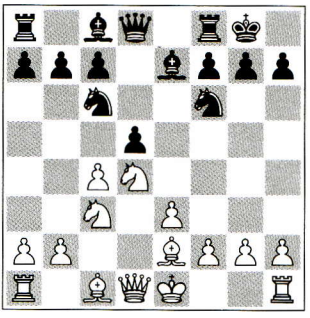
6.exd4 d5 is harmless and leads into the **French Exchange Variation**!

6. ... 0-0

7. ♗f1-e2

If White seeks to prevent ...d7-d5 with 7.♘c2, Black can play 7...♘b4!, with a nice game.

7. ... d7-d5



This is the move that solves all of Black's problems.

8. ♘d4xc6

8.cxd5 ♘b4! is optimum for Black.

8. ... b7xc6

9. 0-0 ♗e7-d6

At the insignificant cost of doubled c-pawns, Black's pieces become menacing.

10. c4xd5

The old move 10.b3 ♕e7 (threatening 11...♕e5) 11.♗b2 was abandoned when I. Zaitsev discovered 11...dxc4!! (many of the novelties Karpov used were Zaitsev's ideas – 11.♘g5!! in the **Open Spanish** immediately comes to mind) 12.bxc4 (12.♗xc4 ♘g4) 12...♖b8 13.♕c1 ♘g4, with a powerful attack.

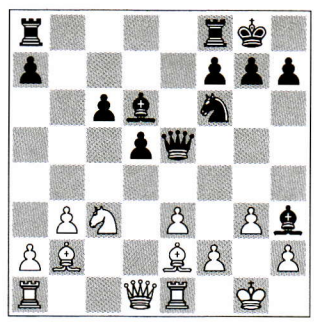
10. ... c6xd5

11. b2-b3 ♕d8-e7

12. ♗c1-b2 ♕e7-e5

13. g2-g3 ♗c8-h3

14. ♖f1-e1 c7-c6



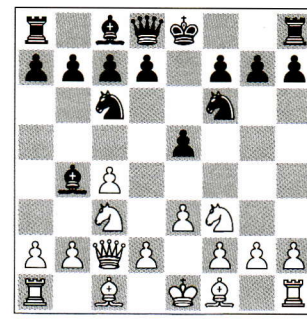
Black's pieces are very active and the chess engines prefer his position to varying degrees.

However, their support seems debatable and it is the result of over-evaluating the importance of the dynamic characteristics of Black's position. Indeed, in the long run, the hanging pawns and the adjacent squares on c6 and d5 could become weak, as is the case in many lines in the **Tarrasch Defence**.

E2) 4. ... ♗f8-b4

This is the most complex line both strategically and tactically, and it is understandably a favourite with players who choose 1...e5 in the belief that it offers greater winning chances.

5. ♕d1-c2!



Controlling the e4-square: the immediate 5.♘d5 would give Black satisfactory play after 5...e4! 6.♘g1 0-0.

Now Black is standing at an important fork in the road:

E21) 5. ... ♗b4xc3

The simplest: Black concedes one of the two bishops, but increases his control of the d5- and e4-squares in preparation for insidious action in the centre.

6. ♕c2xc3 ♕d8-e7

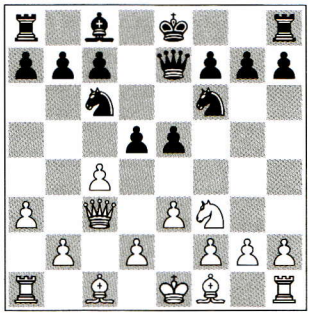
Although 6...e4!? is little seen, it seems feasible.

7. a2-a3 d7-d5!

Black ignores dogma and opens up the position, notwithstanding White's two bishops.

The attempt to stop b2-b4 with 7...a5 does not bear fruit due to 8.b4! axb4

9.axb4 ♖xa1 10.♕xa1 e4 11.b5 exf3 12.bxc6 fxg2 13.cxd7+ ♕xd7 14.♗xg2, and the bishop pair represents an edge for White.



8. d2-d4

Safer than 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♕b3 ♘b6 10.d3 a5!? 11.♗d2 a4, and Black has a nice active game.

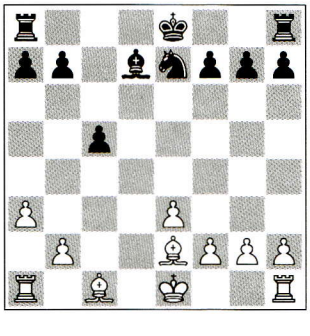
8. ... e5xd4
9. ♘f3xd4 ♘c6xd4
10. ♕c3xd4 c7-c5

Perhaps 10...0-0!? 11.cxd5 ♖d8 is better.

11. ♕d4-h4 ♗c8-e6

Following 11...dxc4 12.♗xc4 0-0 13.♗d2 ♗e6 14.♗e2 ♖fd8 15.♗c3, White has good control of the dark squares.

12. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5
13. ♕h4xe7+! ♘d5xe7
14. ♗f1-b5+ ♗e6-d7
15. ♗b5-e2!



If you take into consideration the respective pawn majorities and the somewhat exposed c5 pawn, the theoretical advantage of the two bishops has a good chance of becoming concrete.

E22) 5. ... 0-0

Black is not worried by the upcoming knight move and gets on with normal development.

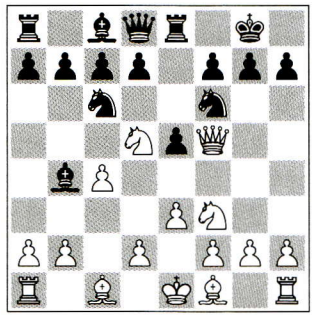
6. ♘c3-d5!

Optimum, now the e4-square is controlled.

6. ... ♖f8-e8

As is often the case in these lines, Black supports the ...e5-e4 advance and at the same time makes the f8-square available for the bishop. Although this is in keeping with the combative game Black wants, the more solid alternatives of 6...a5 and 6...♗c5 do not seem to bring about any problems.

7. ♕c2-f5!?



This 'novelty' was played in the 1970's by top English grandmaster Raymond Keene, and it has now replaced the old favourite 7.♗d3, which after 7...g6 8.a3 ♗f8 does not achieve anything in particular for White.

On the other hand, the curious queen move has the virtue of increasing both the tactical and the strategic pressure.

7. ... d7-d6

The simplest: Black accepts the prospect of doubled f-pawns, believing his better development represents an advantage.

7...♘xd5?! is considered an error because of 8.cxd5 d6 9.♕e4 ♘d4! (saving the piece) 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.♕xd4, and Black has no compensation for the pawn. Well, that is what theory tells us. It is curious that the most recent and sophisticated chess engines evaluate the position as equal after the move 11...♗c5, probably because they give undue importance to Black's better development. Are the new generation of chess programs putting less store in material advantage than we humans?

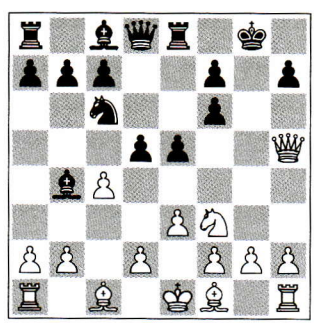
8. ♘d5xf6+ g7xf6!

Keeping the queens on the board is more in keeping with the ambitious intent of the variation than 8...♕xf6; after 9.♕xf6 gxf6 10.a3 ♗c5 11.b4 ♗b6 12.♗b2 a5 13.b5 ♘e7, Black has a playable position, but one that offers virtually no chances of winning.

9. ♕f5-h5

It is worth giving some thought to 9.♕c2 e4 10.♘g1!?, with a complex position that is not easy to assess.

9. ... d6-d5



A thematic move: Black has a lead in development and thus opens up the position and plays in the centre so as to limit the negative effect of the weaknesses in his pawn structure. In addition, the b4 bishop can now zoom back to f8 in the event its assistance is needed in the defence of the kingside.

9...e4!?, which prevents ♗d3, is a playable but rare alternative. One can presume this is because few players relish the prospect of 10.a3! exf3! 11.gxf3!? ♗c5 12.♖g1+ ♔h8 13.♕h6.

10. ♗f1-d3

10.cxd5 ♕xd5 does not cause Black any problems, whereas 10.a3 could merit attention: 10...♗f8 11.d4 ♗e6!, with an unclear position.

10. ... e5-e4

11. c4xd5!

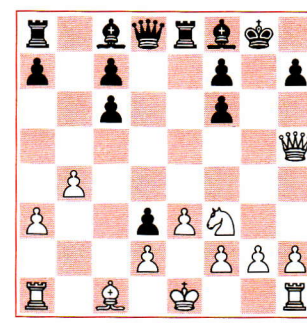
11.♗c2? dxc4 is nice for Black.

11. ... e4xd3

12. d5xc6 b7xc6

13. a2-a3 ♗b4-f8

14. b2-b4

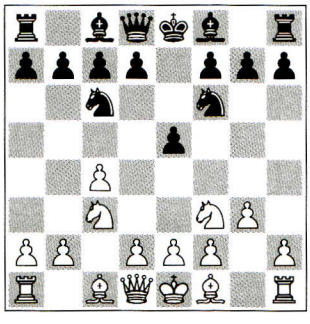


Black's pawn structure is a shambles, and after ♗b2, White's advantage seems to be clear enough. However, this is actually not the case; there is no doubt that Black would be in big trouble if White's development were com-

plete, but here Black has control of the vital centre squares, and after active moves such as 14...a5 or 14...♖e4, his defensive resources are completely adequate.

Four Knights Variation with 4.g3

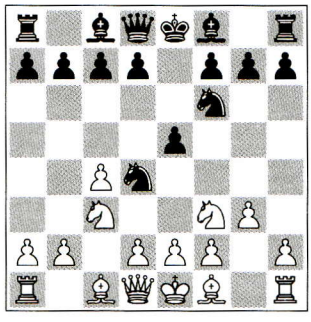
1. c2-c4 e7-e5
2. ♘b1-c3 ♘g8-f6
3. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6
4. g2-g3



The kingside fianchetto has always been the most popular continuation.
Now Black can select from four principal replies, given that the following two minor alternatives do not pass muster:
4...g6 leaves White with a freer game after 5.d4 exd4 6.♘xd4 ♗g7 7.♗g2;
4...e4?! is doubtful as after 5.♘g5, the e4 pawn will be vulnerably weak.

A) 4. ... ♘c6-d4

This concrete move is typical of the contemporary approach to the game, and was first played by Kortchnoi at the beginning of the 1970's.
It was initially greeted with scepticism, but its reliability was eventually proved over the board and at the beginning of the new millennium it was adopted by many star players (Aronian, Svidler, Gelfand, Van Wely, etc.).



Contemporary players are more flexible regarding the old dogma of not moving the same piece twice in the opening phase.
In this case, the position is closed and therefore this transgression does not carry great risks. In addition, exchanging pieces has a tendency to free up the defender's position.
The move also makes the useful ...c7-c6 advance possible. Another attractive feature of this choice is that compared to other lines, in particular 4...♗b4 and 4...d5, there is only a modest amount of related theory. For many this is not a minor consideration as it allows you to play the variation with comparatively little preparation.

5. ♗f1-g2

Practically forced. *5.♘xd4?! is clearly dubious: 5...exd4 6.♘b5 ♗c5; as is 5.♘xe5? ♕e7 6.f4 d6 7.♘d3 ♗f5, with more than abundant compensation.*

5. ... ♘d4xf3+
6. ♗g2xf3 ♗f8-b4

6...♗c5!? is yet another high-performing move that inexplicably remains less popular.

7. ♕d1-b3

Avoiding doubled pawns and threatening the bishop. Without a knight on c6, the standard 7.♘d5 does not gain anything for White as there is 7...♘xd5 8.cxd5 ♗c5.

7. ... ♗b4-c5

Or 7...a5 8.a3 ♗c5.

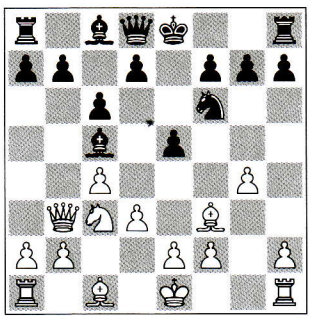
8. d2-d3!?

8.0-0 0-0 9.d3 c6 does not give White more than parity.

8. ... c7-c6

Another possibility is 8...0-0 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗xf6 ♕xf6 11.♘e4 ♕e7 12.♘xc5 ♕xc5, with equality.

9. g3-g4!?



An original attempt to complicate the game.

9. ... h7-h6

10. h2-h4 d7-d5

Black plays straight from the book and responds in the centre, although he can opt for the more prudent 10...d6 if he wishes.

11. g4-g5 h6xg5

12. h4xg5 ♖h8xh1+

13. ♗f3xh1 ♘f6-g4

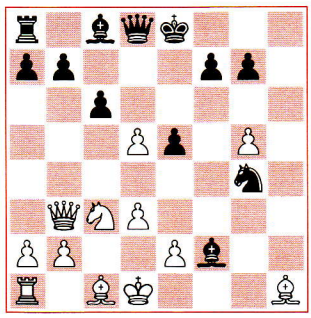
Attacking f2 and g5.

14. c4xd5!

Following 14.e3? ♕xg5, the threat of ♕h4 is decisive.

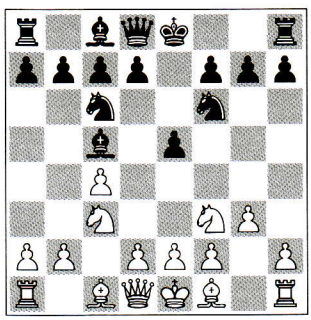
14. ... ♗c5xf2+!

15. ♔e1-d1



This position is not easy to evaluate, though you get the impression that White has one or two extra chances.

B) 4. ... ♗f8-c5



This bishop move is one of the most natural moves to play, yet in the past it was considered to be dubious because of the pseudo-sacrifice on e5.

However, contemporary players are reluctant to take anything for granted, and adequate countermeasures have been found.

5. ♗f1-g2

5.♘xe5 (the idea is to recapture with a fork on d4) is no longer considered to be a refutation as 5...♗xf2+! 6.♔xf2

♘xe5 7.e4 c5 8.d4 cxd4 9.♕xd4 0-0 leaves Black with active piece play that compensates for White's strong centre and his two bishops.

5. ... d7-d6

After 5...0-0 the thematic 6.♘xe5!? is probably more effective now than one move earlier.

We should also mention the intrepid 5...e4!? 6.♘h4! (Black will answer 6.♘g5 with 6...♗xf2+!, with a problem-free position) 6...♕e7 7.d3, and it is not so clear whether White's theoretical advantage in fact exists.

6. 0-0 0-0

7. d2-d3

Preparing d2-d4 with 7.e3 will not disturb Black too much after 7...a6 8.d4 ♗a7!.

7. ... h7-h6

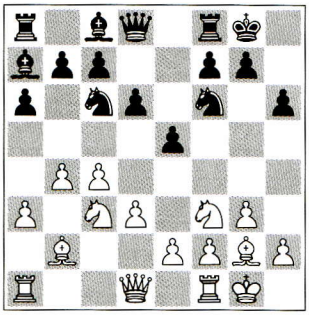
A typical prophylactic move.

Black can also ignore the 'threat' of ♗g5 and play 7...a6, given that after 8.♗g5 h6 9.♗xf6 ♕xf6 10.♘e4 ♕e7 11.♘xc5 dxc5, his pawn structure is actually not that bad: the d4-square is well controlled and the semi-open d-file gives Black opportunities.

8. a2-a3 a7-a6

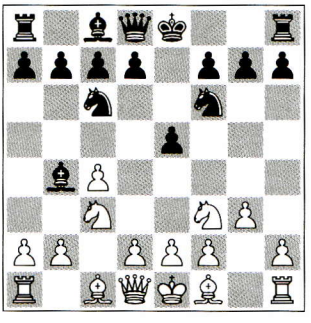
9. b2-b4 ♗c5-a7

10. ♗c1-b2



The position is balanced; a possible continuation could be **10...♗g4 11.h3 ♗e6 12.♖c1 ♕d7 13.♔h2 ♘h7**, with the idea of ...f5, with equal chances.

C) 4. ... ♗f8-b4



One of the most important and complex English positions.

Its conceptual similarity with the **Rossolimo Variation** of the **Sicilian** is evident – 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5. However, being a tempo down alters things entirely: against the Sicilian, White is looking for an advantage, here Black is simply seeking to create a complex position that may offer him some chances.

What is the idea behind the bishop move? We have already noted that the ...e5-e4 advance is premature, and thus Black gives himself the option of ...♗xc3 so as to make it playable.

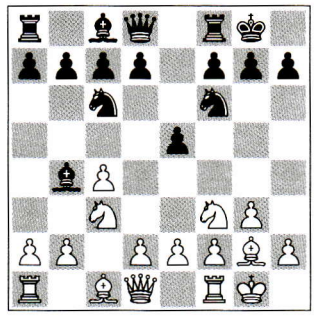
5. ♗f1-g2

The move ♘d5 is the standard way to meet ...♗b4, but in this case 5.♘d5 weakens White's control of the e4-square, and therefore after 5...e4 6.♘h4 ♗c5 7.♗g2 0-0 8.0-0 ♖e8, Black can be satisfied with his progress.

5. ... 0-0

6. 0-0

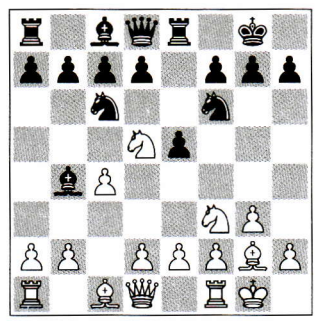
6.♘d5 e4! is good for Black here as well.



After White castles, we are at an important strategic crossroads: is it better to continue with development, eliminate the possibility of ♘d5, or immediately play 6...e4 ?

One of the beauties of the opening phase is that there is so often no simple answer to such questions, even though the third option is the favourite move of most players and also the best performing.

C1) 6. ... ♖f8-e8
7. ♘c3-d5



7. ... ♗b4-f8!?

The thematic 7...e4 is not as good, as after White has castled he can play 8.♘e1! followed by d3 and ♘xd3, with an edge.

Also 7...♘xd5 gives White the freer game following 8.cxd5 ♘d4 9.♘xd4 exd4 10.e3.

8. d2-d3 h7-h6
9. b2-b3 d7-d6
10. ♗c1-b2

with a small plus for White.

C2) 6. ... ♗b4xc3
7. b2xc3

7.dxc3 d6 has scored nicely for Black.

7. ... ♖f8-e8

An alternative is 7...d6 8.d3 e4!? 9.♘d4, while 7...e4 transposes to the following line.

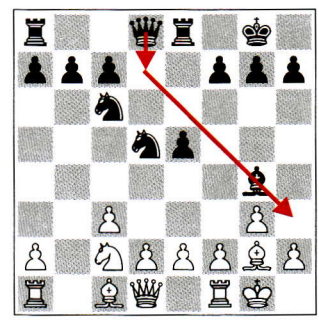
8. ♘f3-e1!?

Heading for e3 by way of c2. Sometimes you see 8.d3 e4!? 9.♘d4 exd3 10.exd3 h6, with approximate equality.

8. ... d7-d5!?

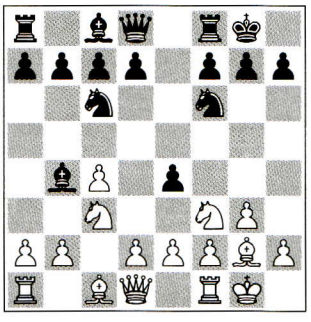
Even though White possesses the bishop pair, Black's intention is to open the game, putting his faith in his slight lead in space and development. Those who prefer a quieter game will be happy to know that both 8...d6 and 8...b6 are playable.

9. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5
10. ♘e1-c2 ♗c8-g4



With the idea of ...♕d7 and ...♗h3. Though Black's pieces are actively placed, chances are equal.

C3) 6. ... e5-e4



With this ambitious move, Black seeks an initiative in the centre.

Now there are two main paths to follow, and as is so frequently the case, one is more restrained and has positional ambitions, while the other is more aggressive and tactical.

C31) 7. ♘f3-e1

The objective is to transfer the knight to e3, from which it will control the important d5-square, with a resulting weakness of the e4-square.

7. ... ♗b4xc3

Before White has a chance to play ♘d5.

8. d2xc3

More in harmony with the positional nature of 7.♘e1 than a recapture with the other pawn: now the queen exerts power over d5.

After 8.bxc3 ♖e8 9.♘c2 d5 10.cxd5 ♕xd5 11.♘e3 ♕h5, Black is doing well.

8. ... h7-h6!

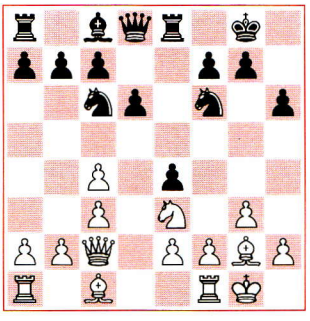
♗g5 must be stopped.

9. ♘e1-c2 ♖f8-e8

A frequent alternative is 9...b6 10.♘e3 ♗b7 11.♘d5 ♘e5 12.b3 ♖e8, with a balanced game.

10. ♘c2-e3 d7-d6

11. ♕d1-c2



The e4 pawn is under pressure, but this advanced pawn favours a possible kingside initiative. The d5-square is controlled by White, but Black can place his pieces on the key e5-square (...♖e5 or ...♘e5).

For this reason White abandons his campaign against the e4 pawn and instead plays f2-f4 – allowing an en passant capture – in the hope of opening up the game to the benefit of his two bishops.

To sum up: we are dealing with a strategically complex game that is clearly going to favour the player with a better positional understanding.

C32) 7. ♘f3-g5

More forcing, as it directly attacks e4.

7. ... ♗b4xc3

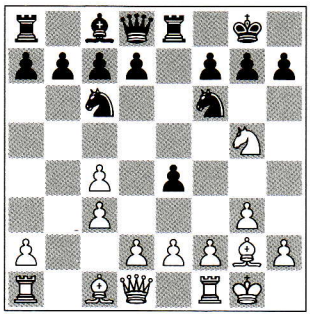
8. b2xc3

Given that the scope of this line is to eliminate the e4 pawn, it is more logical to take with this pawn, and indeed the alternative capture is much rarer, even if the two moves have in fact the same performance.

8. ... ♖f8-e8

Now Black threatens to chase off the intruder on g5: after 9.♕c2 ♕e7 we have

the same problem again, so White has to respond energetically.

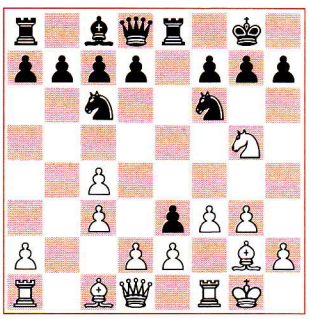


9. f2-f3!

White's intended pawn exchange will open the f-file for the rook and create an imposing group of centre pawns.

9.d3 offers a lot less, and will create an arid position of equality after 9...exd3 10.exd3 d6.

9. ... e4-e3!



This brilliant positional sacrifice was Karpov's secret weapon for his match against Kasparov in 1987, and it has now overtaken the previous favourite 9...exf3 in popularity. The old move is certainly playable but Black runs into some minor difficulties following 10.♘xf3 d5 11.d4! (Kasparov's idea) 11...♘e4 12.♕c2! dxc4 13.♖b1 f5 14.g4!.

C321) 10. d2-d3

Kasparov thought for a good hour before deciding on this. It is now the most common reply, but perhaps taking the pawn is the critical move.

10. ... d7-d5!

11. ♕d1-b3!

11.cxd5 ♘xd5 gives too much play to the black pieces.

11. ... ♘c6-a5!

12. ♕b3-a3 c7-c6

Threatening c4.

13. c4xd5 c6xd5

14. f3-f4

Allowing the knight to retreat to f3.

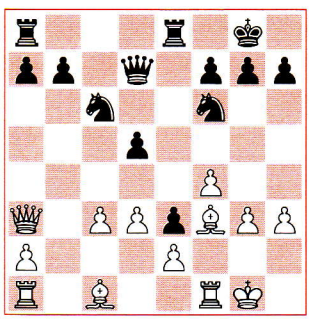
14. ... ♗c8-g4

Probably better than Karpov's choice of 14...♘c6.

15. ♘g5-f3 ♘a5-c6

16. h2-h3 ♗g4xf3

17. ♗g2xf3 ♕d8-d7



and it is hard to say who is doing better: the e3 pawn is a thorn in White's side, but his dark-squared bishop may become unpleasant for Black later in the game.

C322) 10. d2xe3

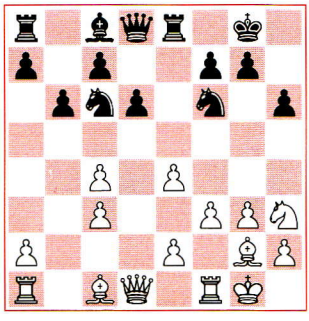
The sacrifice is purely positional: the c-pawns are both doubled and isolated.

10. ... h7-h6!?

11. ♘g5-h3 b7-b6

Black is in no hurry to take back the pawn: 11...♘e5 12.e4 ♘xc4 13.♕d4 would give White too much piece activity.

12. e3-e4 d7-d6



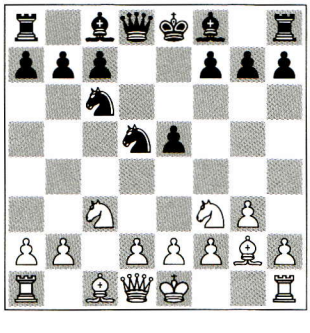
White is a pawn up and has the plus of having the two bishops in a relatively open position. Yet this is not enough to give him the advantage. Surprisingly, the chess engines correctly give an assessment of equality, yet further evidence of their increasing expertise as strategic 'thinkers'.

D) 4. ... d7-d5

In the **Open Sicilian** White plays d2-d4 – here too Black pushes his d-pawn to a centre square.

5. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5

6. ♗f1-g2



The English has become a **Dragon** with an extra tempo!

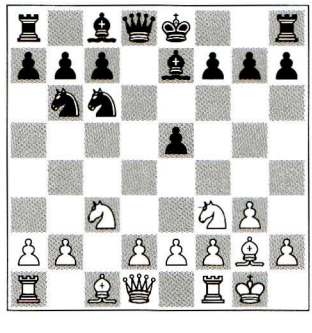
Given the sharp nature of this line in the Sicilian, an extra tempo is going to make it even more dangerous, and Black would be wise to avoid overly aggressive lines. For this reason it would be foolhardy to mimic the **Yugoslav Attack**, which White can play against the Dragon proper, (with ...♗e6, ...f6, ...0-0-0 etc.).

6. ... ♘d5-b6!

A position that is often reached with 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗g2 ♘b6 6.♘f3 ♘c6.

The knight move makes the d5-square unstable (White was threatening 7.♘xe5!) and opens the path of the queen on d8, so as to stop White from pushing his pawn to d4. Do not forget that in the **Classical Variation** of the **Dragon** White plays the prophylactic ♘b3 with the same aim, namely to stop the freeing ...d6-d5 advance. After 6...♗e6 7.0-0 ♗e7?! (7...♘b6) 8.d4!, White is better. The retreat 6...♘de7 is less effective due to 7.b4!.

7. 0-0 ♗f8-e7



White must decide on his game plan for the queenside, which is the natural side of the board for him to play on. White will sooner or later play his pawn

to d3, and can choose from various pawn set-ups:

1. pawns on a3-b4, the most common configuration;

2. seek to play b2-b4 after ♖b1 (saving a move by not playing a2-a3);

3. more rarely, an a2-a4 advance, and if Black tries ...a7-a5, the b5-square will become the destination for the c3 knight, but with the drawback of seriously weakening b4.

D1) 8. ♖a1-b1 0-0

Kortchnoi's surprising idea 8...g5 has scored acceptably well, but it seems a little overly adventurous.

9. b2-b4! a7-a6

9...♗xb4 10.♘xe5 is nice for White.

10. a2-a4

10.a3 transposes to the following line.

10. ... ♗c8-f5

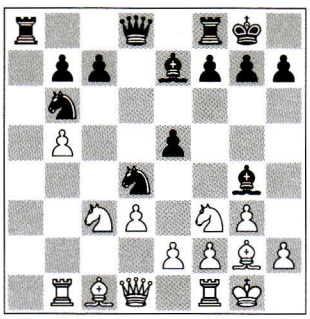
10...e4!? merits consideration: 11.♘xe4 ♗f5.

11. b4-b5! a6xb5

12. a4xb5 ♘c6-d4!

12...♗xb1?! 13.bxc6 ♗g6 14.cxb7 gives White an advantage.

13. d2-d3 ♗f5-g4



Threatening to double the f-pawns.

14. ♘f3xd4

14.♘xe5? loses to the brilliant 14...♘a4!!.

14. ... e5xd4

15. ♘c3-e4 ♕d8-d7

with a reasonable position for Black, who has an active game at the cost of some weaknesses in his pawn structure.

D2) 8. a2-a3 0-0

8...a5 weakens b5 and, to a certain extent, b6, without recompense.

9. b2-b4 ♗c8-e6

9...♖e8 is an important alternative: Black's intention is to play ...♗f8, ...♘d4 and perhaps ...♗g4 so as to apply pressure on e2 and f3.

The same plan (with ♖e1, ♗f1 and ♘d5) is sometimes adopted by White in the **Classical Variation** of the **Dragon**. Following the rook move, White usually continues with 10.d3, which transposes to the following line.

10. ♖a1-b1

Also here, 10.d3 is a transposition.

10. ... f7-f6

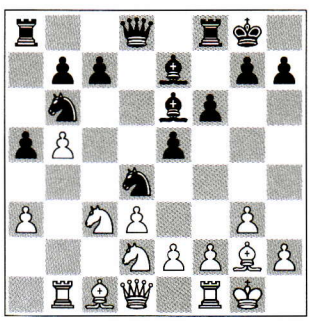
Freeing the c6 knight of its guard duty defending e5.

11. d2-d3 a7-a5

It may be more prudent for the knight to go straight to d4, but as always there are good and bad sides to this too.

12. b4-b5 ♘c6-d4

13. ♘f3-d2



This is the number 1 choice and it is the most insidious move on offer: it protects b3, attacks b7 and sets a cunning trap.

13. ... ♗e6-d5!

Not an easy move to find: conceding the light-squared bishop does not readily come to mind.

13...♘d5? looks like a nice move; unfortunately, it has the defect of losing a piece! Given that this is such a natural-looking move, it is easy to understand why this trap ensnares so many victims. After 14.♗xd5! ♗xd5 15.e3!, the knight has only two flight squares: if it flees to f5 it will be subject to one prong of a fork, if it goes to e6, after 16.e4, the central bishop has nowhere to run! In this case encouraging the pawn to advance to b5 was not such a hot idea.

14. ♘c3xd5 ♘b6xd5

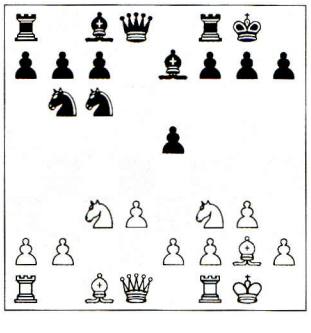
Once again, greater piece activity compensates for the opponent having the bishop pair.

15. ♘d2-e4 f6-f5

16. e2-e3

The resulting tactical complications are tricky to evaluate.

D3) 8. d2-d3 0-0



At this point White can continue in Dragon fashion with 9.♗e3 (...♗e6 is a standard move in the **Classical Dragon**), or otherwise prepare further queenside play with a2-a3 and b2-b4. However, after 9...a5 10.a4 ♗g4 11.♖c1 ♖e8, Black has achieved good results.

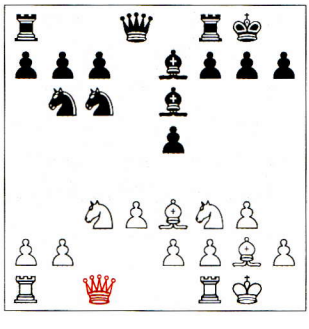
As already noted, 9.a4 is playable notwithstanding the fact that it weakens b4 (as ...a5 is equally feasible in the **Accelerated Dragon**).

D31) 9. ♗c1-e3 ♗c8-e6

As always, 9...♖e8 is a valid alternative. The idea is to play ...♗f8 and ...♘d4.

10. ♖a1-c1

The most natural, though 10.♕c1!? with a ♖d1 and d3-d4 follow-up is worth considering.



This move takes its inspiration from 10...♕c8 the **Sicilian**, with the corresponding plan of ♖d1 and d4 (...♖d8 and ...d5 in the Sicilian). There White has already advanced his f-pawn two squares. 10.♕c1 has the additional benefit of preventing the pawn advance to f4.

10. ... f7-f6

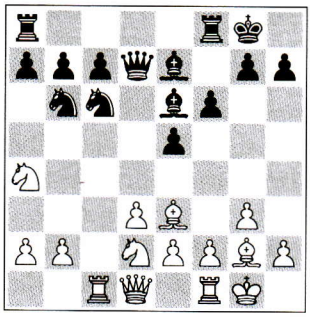
The most solid move. If Black wishes, he can also play the more ambitious 10...f5!? 11.a3 ♗f6 12.b4 ♘d4.

11. ♘f3-d2

The immediate 11.♘a4?! would be met by the strong 11...e4!.

11. ... ♕d8-d7

12. ♘c3-a4



with a complicated game that supplies both colours with chances.

D32) 9. a2-a3 ♗c8-e6

As always, stopping b2-b4 with 9...a5 is of doubtful merit as it weakens b5.

On the other hand 9...♖e8 is good: 10.b4 ♗f8, with the intention of ...a5 and ...♘d4.

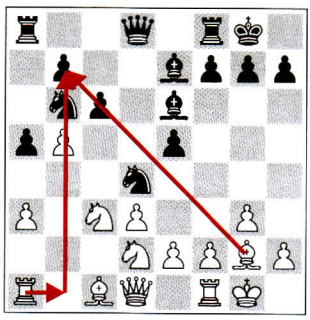
10. b2-b4 a7-a5

The more solid 10...f6 is another possibility.

11. b4-b5 ♘c6-d4

12. ♘f3-d2 c7-c6!

Also here, as in the previous positions (with ...f6 and ♖b1 already played), 12...♘d5? loses a piece as there is 13.♗xd5! followed by e3 and e4.



It could seem perilous to play the pawn to c6 and open the b-file for the white rook, but in fact Black has a sufficiently active game.

After **13.bxc6 ♘xc6 14.♖b1 ♖c8** both sides have approximately equal possibilities.

Uhlmann,Wolfgang
Bellon Lopez,Juan Manuel
Bucharest 1978

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 e4 4.♘g5 b5 5.d3 ♗b7 6.♘gxe4 bxc4 7.g3 cxd3 8.exd3 ♗b4 9.♗g2 ♘xe4 10.dxe4 ♕f6 11.0-0 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 0-0 13.♗f4 ♕c6 14.♖b1 ♘a6 15.♕d5 ♘c5 16.c4 d6 17.e5 ♕xd5 18.cxd5 ♗a6 19.exd6 ♗xf1 20.♗xf1 g5 21.dxc7 gxf4 22.d6 f3 23.♖c1 ♘d7 24.♗b5 ♘b6 25.d7 ♔g7 26.♗c6 ♖ad8 27.cxd8♕ ♖xd8 28.♖e1 ♖b8 29.h4 ♔f6 30.g4 1-0

Elianov,Pavel
Rublevsky,Sergey
Sochi tt 2006 (8)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e4 ♗c5 5.♘xe5 ♘xe5 6.d4 ♗b4 7.dxe5 ♘xe4 8.♕d4 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗e7 10.♕g4 ♔f8 11.♕e4 d6 12.♗f4 dxe5 13.♗xe5 ♗f6 14.f4 g6 15.♗e2 ♔g7 16.0-0 ♕e7 17.♖ad1 ♗xe5 18.fxe5 ♗f5 19.♖xf5 gxf5 20.♕xf5 ♖he8 21.♖d7 ♕e6 22.♕g5+ ♔f8 23.♖xc7 ♕xe5 24.♕h6+ ♔g8 25.♗d3 ♕e3+ 26.♕xe3 ♖xe3 27.♖d7 ♖ae8 28.♔f2 ♖3e7 29.♖d4 ♖e6 30.♖g4+ ♔f8 31.♖f4 ♖a6 32.♗b1 ♖a3 33.♖f3 ♖c8 34.♔e2 ♖xc4 35.♔d2 b5 0-1

Tartakower,Savielly
Keres,Paul
Warsaw ol 1935 (6)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♗b4 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗h4 ♘e5 8.♕b3 ♗xc3+ 9.♕xc3 ♘g6 10.♕e3+ ♔f8 11.♗g3 d6 12.0-0-0 ♕e8 13.♕xe8+ ♘xe8 14.♘b5 ♔e7 15.e4 ♗e6 16.f4 ♗d7 17.c5 f5 18.♘xc7 ♖c8 19.♘d5+ ♔d8 20.e5 ♖xc5+ 21.♔b1 ♗e6 22.♘c3 ♔e7 23.♗f2 ♖c8 24.exd6+ ♘xd6 25.g3 ♖hd8 26.♗xa7 ♘e4 27.♖xd8 ♘xc3+ 28.bxc3 ♖xd8 29.♗d4 ♖a8 30.a3 ♔f7 31.♔b2 ♗d5 32.♖g1 ♘e7 33.♗d3 g6 34.♖e1 ♘c6 35.♗c5 b6 36.♗b4 ♖a7 37.♗c2 ♘a5 38.a4 ♔f6 39.♗xa5 ♖xa5 40.♖e5 ♗c6 41.♖xa5 bxa5 42.c4 ♔e6 43.♔c3 ♔d6 44.♔d4 h5 45.c5+ ♔e6 46.♗b3+ ♔f6 47.h4 ♗e8 48.c6 ♗xc6 49.♔c5 ♗e8 50.♔b6 ♔e7 51.♔xa5 ♔d6 52.♔b4 ♔c6 53.a5 ♔b7 54.♗c4 1-0

Bu Xiangzhi
Bacrot,Etienne
Turin ol 2006 (11)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e4 ♗b4 5.d3 d6 6.g3 ♗g4 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.♕xf3 ♘d4 9.♕d1 c6 10.♗g2 0-0 11.0-0 ♗c5 12.♔h2 a5 13.f4 b5 14.f5 b4 15.♘a4 ♘d7 16.♘xc5 dxc5 17.g4 f6 18.h4 h6 19.♗d2 ♔f7 20.♖f2 ♔e7 21.♕g1 ♖h8 22.♗f3 ♘b6 23.♗d1 a4 24.♖g2 a3 25.b3 ♕e8 26.♔g3 g5 27.♔f2 ♘c8 28.♖h2 ♘d6 29.♕g3 ♘f7 30.♗e2 ♕g8 31.♖ah1 ♕g7 32.♗d1 ♖ad8 33.♗e3 ♖d6 34.♔e1 ½-½

Timman,Jan
Karpov,Anatoly
Montreal 1979 (11)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♗e7 5.d4 exd4 6.♘xd4 0-0 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.♗e2 d5 9.0-0 ♗d6 10.b3 ♕e7 11.♗b2 dxc4 12.bxc4 ♖b8 13.♕c1 ♘g4 14.g3 ♖e8 15.♘d1 ♘xh2 16.c5 ♘xf1 17.cxd6 ♘xg3 18.fxg3 ♕xd6 19.♔f2 ♕h6 20.♗d4 ♕h2+ 21.♔e1 ♕xg3+ 22.♔d2 ♕g2 23.♘b2 ♗a6 24.♘d3 ♗xd3 25.♔xd3 ♖bd8 26.♗f1 ♕e4+ 27.♔c3 c5 28.♗xc5 ♕c6 29.♔b3 ♖b8+ 30.♔a3 ♖e5 31.♗b4 ♕b6 0-1

Kasparov,Garry
Romanishin,Oleg
Tbilisi ch-URS 1978 (15)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♗b4 5.♕c2 0-0 6.♘d5 ♖e8 7.♕f5 ♗e7 8.♘xe5 ♘b4 9.♘xb4 ♗xb4 10.a3 d5 11.♕c2 ♖xe5 12.axb4 ♗f5 13.d3 ♕e7 14.♗d2 d4 15.♗e2 dxe3 16.fxe3 ♗g4 17.♗f3 ♗xf3 18.gxf3 ♖xe3+ 19.♗xe3 ♕xe3+ 20.♕e2 ♕g5 21.♕d2 ♕h4+ 22.♔d1 ♘h5 23.♔c2 h6 24.♖he1 ♕f6 25.♖a5 ♘f4 26.♖e4 ♘e6 27.♕e3 b6 28.♖d5 c5 29.f4 cxb4 30.d4 a5 31.♕d2 a4 32.♕xb4 ♕g6 33.♕e1 ♘xf4 34.♖e5 a3 35.♕g3 ♕c6 36.d5 ♘xd5 37.bxa3 ♘f6 38.♖d4 ♖c8 39.♔b2 ½-½

Serper,Grigory
Kortchnoi,Viktor
Groningen 1993 (9)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 ♘b6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♖b1 g5 9.d3 h5 10.a3 h4 11.b4 hxg3 12.hxg3 a6 13.b5 ♘d4 14.bxa6 ♖xa6 15.♘xd4 exd4

16.♘b5 ♘a4 17.e3 c6 18.♘xd4 ♘c3 19.♕c2 ♘xb1 20.♕xb1 ♕d6 21.♕b3 ♕h6 22.♖e1 c5 23.♘f3 ♗h3 24.♕xb7 ♗xg2 25.♕c8+ ♗d8 26.♔xg2 ♖e6 27.♘g1 ♕h1+ 28.♔f1 ♖f6 29.e4 ♖h2 30.♔e2 ♖hxf2+ 31.♔d1 ♖d6 32.♗e3 ♖xd3+ 33.♔c1 ♖c3+ 34.♔d1 ♕h6 0-1

Vallejo Pons,Francisco
Gelfand,Boris
Pamplona 1999/00 (1)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 ♘d4 5.♗g2 ♘xf3+ 6.♗xf3 ♗b4 7.♕b3 ♗c5 8.d3 c6 9.g4 d6 10.g5 ♘g8 11.♘a4 ♘e7 12.♘xc5 dxc5 13.♗e4 0-0 14.♕c3 ♘f5 15.h4 ♘d4 16.e3 f5 17.♗g2 ♕e8 18.♕d2 f4 19.exd4 f3 20.♗f1 exd4+ 21.♔d1 ♗g4 22.b3 ♕g6 23.♗a3 b6 24.♔c2 a5 25.♖g1 ♕h5 26.♖e1 a4 27.b4 cxb4 28.♕xb4 ♕xh4 29.♖g3 c5 30.♕d2 ♖ae8 31.♗c1 ♗h5 32.♖xe8 ♖xe8 33.♕f4 ♕h1 34.♗h3 ♖e2+ 35.♗d2 ♕a1 36.♕b8+ ♗e8 37.♗e6+ ♖xe6 38.♖xf3 ♕xa2+ 39.♔d1 ♕b1+ 40.♗c1 ♕b3+ 41.♔d2 ♕a2+ 0-1

Kasparov,Garry
Karpov,Anatoly
Sevilla Wch-match 1987 (2)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 ♗b4 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 e4 7.♘g5 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♖e8 9.f3 e3 10.d3 d5 11.♕b3 ♘a5 12.♕a3 c6 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.f4 ♘c6 15.♖b1 ♕c7 16.♗b2 ♗g4 17.c4 dxc4 18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♘e4 ♔g7 20.dxc4 ♖ad8 21.♖b3 ♘d4 22.♖xe3 ♕xc4 23.♔h1 ♘f5 24.♖d3 ♗xe2 25.♖xd8 ♖xd8 26.♖e1 ♖e8 27.♕a5 b5 28.♘d2 ♕d3 29.♘b3 ♗f3 30.♗xf3 ♕xf3+ 31.♔g1 ♖xe1+ 32.♕xe1 ♘e3 0-1

Kasparov,Garry
Ivanchuk,Vasily
Moscow ch-URS 1988 (2)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 ♗b4 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 e4 7.♘g5 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♖e8 9.f3 exf3 10.♘xf3 d5 11.d4 ♘e4 12.♕c2 dxc4 13.♖b1 f5 14.g4 ♕e7 15.gxf5 ♘d6 16.♘g5 ♕xe2 17.♗d5+ ♔h8 18.♕xe2 ♖xe2 19.♗f4 ♘d8 20.♖be1 ♖xe1 21.♖xe1 ♗d7 22.♗xd6 cxd6 23.♖e7 ♗c6 24.f6 1-0

Smetankin,Stanislav
Mikhalevski,Victor
Schaumburg 2006 (8)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♘xd5 4.g3 e5 5.♗g2 ♘b6 6.d3 ♗e7 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.0-0 0-0 9.a3 ♗e6 10.b4 f6 11.♗b2 a5 12.b5 ♘d4 13.♘d2 ♕d7 14.♗xb7 ♖ab8 15.♗g2 ♘xb5 16.♘xb5 ♕xb5 17.♕c2 c5 18.a4 ♕a6 19.♗c6 c4 20.♗b5 cxd3 21.♗xd3 ♖fc8 22.♗xh7+ ♔f8 23.♕g6 ♕xe2 24.♖ad1 ♘xa4 25.♗a1 ♘b2 26.♗xb2 ♖xb2 27.♘e4 ♗h3 0-1

Bareev,Evgeny
Volkov,Sergey
Moscow ch-RUS 2005 (4)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 ♘d4 5.♗g2 ♘xf3+ 6.♗xf3 ♗c5 7.0-0 0-0 8.e3 d6 9.d4 ♗b4 10.♘d5 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♗h3 12.♕a4 ♗xf1 13.♔xf1 a5 14.a3 ♖e8 15.♕d1 e4 16.♗e2 c6 17.axb4 axb4 18.♗d2 ♕b6 19.♖c1 c5 20.♕b3 ♖a5 21.♔g2 g6 22.h4 h5 23.♖d1 ♖d8 24.♕c2 f5 25.dxc5 dxc5 26.f3 exf3+ 27.♗xf3

♕f6 28.e4 fxe4 29.♗xe4 ♖a2 30.♗c1 ♖f8 31.d6 ♔h7 32.♕xc5 ♖a5 33.♕xa5 ♕f2+ 34.♔h3 ♕e2 35.♗xg6+ 1-0

Bauer,Christian
Naer,Evgeny
Fügen tt 2006 (3)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 ♗b4 5.♘d5 e4 6.♘h4 0-0 7.♗g2 ♖e8 8.0-0 ♗c5 9.d3 exd3 10.♕xd3 ♘e5 11.♕c3 c6 12.♗e3 cxd5 13.♗xc5 d6 14.♗d4 ♘e4 15.♗xe4 dxe4 16.♖ad1 ♗h3 17.♖fe1 ♕c7 18.b3 h6 19.♘g2 ♗xg2 20.♔xg2 ♕c6 21.a4 a6 22.a5 ♖ac8 23.h3 ♖e6 24.♕e3 ♘g6 25.♗c3 ♕c5 26.♕xc5 ♖xc5 27.♖d4 ♘e7 28.♖ed1 ♘f5 29.♖d5 ♖xd5 30.cxd5 ♖g6 31.♔h2 h5 32.e3 ♔f8 33.♖c1 h4 34.g4 ♘e7 35.♗d4 ♖g5 36.♖c7 ♖xd5 37.♖xb7 ♘c6 38.b4 f6 39.♔g2 ♔g8 40.b5 ♖xb5 41.♖xb5 axb5 42.a6 ♔f7 43.f4 exf3+ 44.♔xf3 ♔e6 45.a7 ♘xa7 46.♗xa7 b4 47.♗d4 b3 48.♔e4 g6 49.♔d3 f5 50.g5 ♔d5 51.♗b2 ♔c5 52.♗c3 ♔d5 53.♗d4 ♔e6 54.e4 d5 55.exd5+ ♔xd5 56.♗b2 ♔c5 57.♗c3 ♔d5 58.♗d4 ♔e6 59.♗f2 ♔e5 60.♗xh4 ♔f4 61.♔c3 ♔e3 62.♔xb3 f4 63.♔c4 ♔f3 64.♔d4 ♔g2 65.♗e1 ♔xh3 66.♔e5 ♔g4 67.♔f6 ♔h5 68.♗f2 1-0

Van Wely,Loek
Ivanchuk,Vasily
Fügen tt 2006 (3)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 ♗c5 5.♗g2 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.e3 a6 8.a3 ♗a7 9.b4 ♗e6 10.d3 e4 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.dxe4 ♗xc4 13.♖e1 ♘e5 14.♕c2 ♗d3 15.♕c3 ♗xe4 16.♘xe5 ♗xg2 17.♔xg2 dxe5 18.♕xe5 ♖e8 19.♕f5 ♕c8 20.♕xc8 ♖axc8 21.♗b2 c5 22.bxc5 ♗xc5 23.♖ec1 ♖c6 24.a4 ♖ec8 25.♔f3 f6 26.♖ab1 ♗b4 27.♖d1 a5 28.♖d7 b5 29.axb5 ♖b6 30.♗d4 ♖xb5 31.g4 ♖cb8 32.♖a7 ♗c5 33.♖xb5 ♖xb5 34.♗xc5 ♖xc5 35.h3 h5 36.♔e4 hxg4 37.hxg4 ♖c4+ 38.♔f5 ♖c5+ 39.♔e4 ♖c4+ 40.♔f5 ♖c5+ 41.♔e4 ½-½

Zhou Jianchao
Vachier-Lagrave,Maxime
Paris FRA-CHN 2006 (1)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 ♗b4 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 e4 7.♘g5 ♗xc3 8.dxc3 ♖e8 9.♘h3 ♘e5 10.b3 d5 11.cxd5 ♗f5 12.d6 ♕d7 13.♘f4 c6 14.f3 ♖ad8 15.g4 exf3 16.exf3 g5 17.gxf5 gxf4 18.♕d4 ♕xf5 19.♕xf4 ♕g6 20.♗a3 ♘d5 21.♕d2 ♘d3 22.f4 ♖e3 23.♔h1 ♘5xf4 24.♖xf4 ♘xf4 25.♖g1 ♘e2 26.♕xe3 ♘xg1 27.♕xg1 ♔h8 28.c4 1-0

Hoffmann,Alexander
Karpatchev,Alexander
Werther open 2006 (3)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 ♘b6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.a3 0-0 9.b4 ♗e6 10.d3 a5 11.b5 ♘d4 12.♘d2 a4 13.♗xb7 ♖a5 14.♖b1 ♕e8 15.♗g2 f6 16.♗b2 ♕d7 17.♖c1 ♖d8 18.e3 ♘xb5 19.♘xb5 ♖xb5 20.♗c6 ♕xd3 21.♗xb5 ♕xb5 22.♕c2 c5 23.e4 ♗b3 24.♘xb3 axb3 25.♕b1 ♘c4 26.♗c3 ♘xa3 27.♕b2 ♘c4 28.♕e2 ♘d6 29.♕g4 ♕d7 30.♕e2 ♕c6 31.f3 ♕b5 32.♕g2 c4 33.♖fd1 ♕c5+ 34.♔h1 ♘b5 35.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 36.♕e2 ♗b6

37.♗b2 ♘d6 38.♕d1 h6 39.♗c3 ♔h7 0-1

Rubinstein,Akiba
Tarrasch,Siegbert
St Petersburg 1914 (7)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.d4 exd4 7.♘xd4 0-0 8.0-0 ♖e8 9.e3 ♘e5 10.b3 d6 11.♗b2 ♗g4 12.f3 ♗d7 13.h3 ♘c6 14.♘c2 ♘e7 15.e4 ♘h5 16.♔h2 ♘c6 17.♕d2 f5 18.exf5 ♗xf5 19.♖ae1 ♕f6 20.f4 ♗xc2 21.♕xc2 ♔h8 22.♘d1 ♕f7 23.♘e3 ♘f6 24.♘d5 ♘xd5 25.cxd5 ♘d4 26.♕f2 ♘f5 27.g4 ♗xb2 28.♕xb2+ ♘g7 29.♕d4 ♖xe1 30.♖xe1 ♖f8 31.♔g3 a5 32.♖e4 ♔g8 33.♕c3 b6 34.♖c4 ♘e8 35.a4 ♘f6 36.♗f3 c6 37.♕d2 cxd5 38.♖c6 ♘e4+ 39.♗xe4 dxe4 40.♕xd6 ♕xb3+ 41.♔h4 ♕f7 42.♔g5 e3 43.♖c7 ♕xf4+ 44.♕xf4 h6+ 45.♔xh6 ♖xf4 46.♖e7 ♖f3 47.h4 ♖f4 48.♔g5 ♖xa4 49.♖xe3 ♖b4 50.♖e6 ♔h7 51.♖e7+ ♔g8 52.♖e6 ♔h7 53.♖e7+ ♔g8 54.h5 gxh5 55.gxh5 ♖c4 56.♖e6 b5 57.♖b6 b4 58.♖b5 a4 59.h6 a3 60.♖b8+ ½-½

Mamedyarov,Shakhriyar
Gagunashvili,Merab
Dubai open 2004 (3)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 ♗b4 5.♗g2 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 h6 9.♖b1 ♖b8 10.e4 ♗e6 11.h3 ♘d7 12.♘h4 ♘e7 13.♕e2 f5 14.exf5 ♘xf5 15.♘f3 ♕f6 16.♘d2 b6 17.♘e4 ♕g6 18.♔h2 ♖be8 19.f4 exf4 20.♗xf4 ♔h8 21.♖be1 ♘f6 22.♘xf6 ♖xf6 23.g4 ♘h4 24.♗c6 ♖ef8 25.♗g3 ♖xf1 26.♖xf1 ♖xf1 27.♕xf1 ♕g5 28.♕e1 1-0

Minor Openings

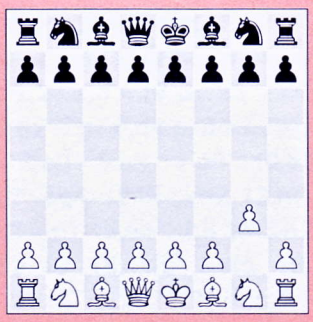
- **Benko Opening 1.g2-g3**
- **Larsen Opening 1.b2-b3**
- **Bird's Opening 1.f2-f4**
- **Van Geet Opening 1.♘b1-c3**

So far we have looked at the Big Four (1.e4, 1.d4, 1.♘f3 and 1.c4) that monopolize the opening 'market'. Now it is time to look at some openings that initially focus on the flanks with a distant eye on the centre.

The openings that we will discuss in this section are the most 'respectable' of the uncommon openings, though still a good deal less popular than the quartet of favourites mentioned above .

We will later examine openings that are best classified as rare, given that they appear with a frequency of less than one in a thousand games.

Benko Opening 1.g2-g3



The name of the Hungarian-born American grandmaster Pal Benko is most commonly associated with the gambit line played after 1.d4 (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5).

However, his name more than merits its attachment to the move 1.g3 : from the 1940's until quite recently, Benko adopted this opening with great consistency and, even more importantly, with optimum results: the fact that Fischer and Tal were two of its victims is comment enough!

1. g2-g3

is fifth in the popularity stakes, and by a good margin: only one game in a hundred begins with this move.

Nonetheless, it performs well – remembering that it frequently transposes to **English**, the **King's Indian Attack**, the **Réti** or the **Catalan**.

Its great virtue, especially with quick time limits, is that Black has to start thinking right from the start! Given its infrequent use, black players are not used to the problem of how to best meet 1.g3 with their existing repertoire, and how transpositions may take them into new waters.

This immediate preparation to fianchetto is perfectly logical: its philosophy is thoroughly modern (control and attack of the centre rather than its occupation), especially in the lines where Black is deliberately allowed to take the centre squares.

1. ... d7-d5

Obviously, almost any other move is possible, but occupation of the centre remains the favourite: 1...♘f6, 1...g6 and 1...c5 are very common, with likely transpositions to almost all of the closed openings. The other means of grabbing part of the centre, 1...e5, is also very frequent, but it usually leads into the main line. However, Black must keep in mind that White can steer the game into the **English 1...e5** by playing 2.c4.

2. ♗f1-g2

Naturally, White can prevent 2...e5 with 2.♘f3, transposing to 1.♘f3 d5 2.g3.

2. ... e7-e5

This is a kind of **Modern Defence with reversed colours**. Having an extra tempo is always good, but in this case it is not enough to guarantee White the advantage.

The solid 2...c6 is a popular choice: now a distinct line that does not transpose is 3.d3 ♘f6 4.♘d2!? e5 5.e4 ♗d6 6.c3 (after 6.♘gf3, we are in a **King's Indian Attack**) 6...0-0 7.♘e2 ♗e6, and Black has no problems.

3. d2-d3

The most natural move. If White wishes to, he can try to exploit the extra tempo with the complex 3.c4!? c6 4.cxd5 cxd5 5.d4!? e4 or otherwise take inspiration from the **Alekhine Defence** and play the provocative 3.♘f3 e4 4.♘d4 c5 5.♘b3 c4 6.♘d4 ♗c5 7.c3. Both options create tense positions that offer possibilities to both players.

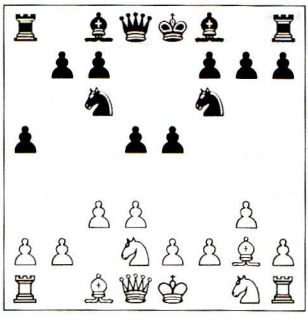
3. ... ♘g8-f6

Black is prudent to avoid excessively aggressive variations.

Now 4.♘f3 ♘c6 takes you into a **reverse Pirc**, previously discussed on page 26, whereas after 4.c4 d4 5.♘f3 ♘c6, we are in a **Réti 2...d4**.

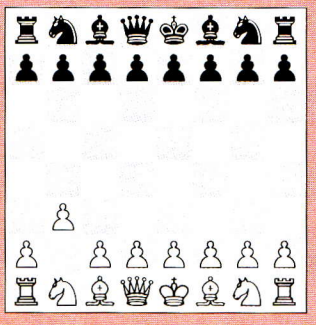
4. ♘b1-d2 ♘b8-c6

5. c2-c3 a7-a5



Sooner of later White should play ♘gf3, creating a **reverse Classical Variation** of the **Pirc**, though the extra tempo is not particularly significant.

Larsen Opening 1.b2-b3



Nimzowitsch opened this way on three occasions in the 1920's. It was adopted by the Italo-Peruvian Esteban Canal in the 1950's, which were boom years for the **King's Indian**. He was fed up with facing one young Soviet player after another who played a kingside fianchetto! When he was asked why he had chosen such a passive-looking move he replied: *'I'll be the first to put a bishop on the long diagonal.'*

However, the line is correctly named in honour of the Danish grandmaster Bent Larsen, who very skilfully deployed it in the 1960's and 70's at the highest levels. As always, the most convincing argument for sceptics are some impressive wins, and Larsen supplied them. Thanks to him the opening is today considered to be both respectable and reliable, even if it has never gained more than modest popularity.

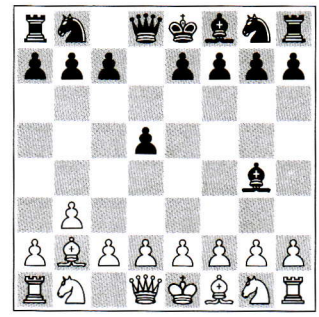
With the immediate queenside fianchetto, White takes a positional tack, and, at least in part, renounces the advantage of having the first move.

Against correct play, White cannot hope for more than equality, but as the Russians say: equality does not mean a draw.
Another selling point for this opening is that the resulting positions are strategic by nature, and it is not necessary to do long hours of preparation before you can use it. In the age of limitless databases, many players are attracted to an opening that allows them to avoid complex theoretical duels.

Obviously, Black can take his choice from a wide range of very different replies. The classical approach of occupying both centre squares with pawns is the number 1 choice, but a slightly more conservative partial occupation is also an option (pawns on e6/d5/c5 or d6/e5).
Other black set-ups based on a kingside fianchetto after 1...♘f6, or 1...c5 followed by 2...d6, are obviously playable too. However, they tend to give White exactly the sort of game he is looking for, namely one with a tiny advantage that is risk-free.

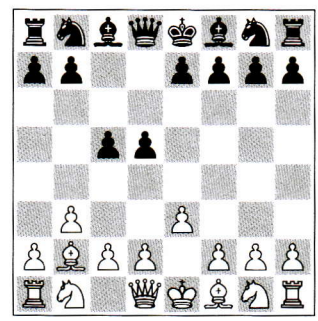
A) 1. ... d7-d5
2. ♗c1-b2 c7-c5

A natural move in the spirit of a **Queen's Pawn Game**. Others prefer the more solid 2...♘f6 3.e3 c6; when this is followed by 4.c4 ♗f5 5.♘f3 we see set-ups that were discussed in the sections on the **Slav** and the **Réti**.
Another tempting alternative is the odd-looking **2...♗g4!?**. The objective is to stop e2-e3 and double the f-pawns after ♘f3.



White can give the bishop a kick with 3.f3 or 3.h3, but after 3...♗h5, Black's hope is that further kingside advances by White (g4 and h4) will be more damaging than productive.
The best performing strategy has been to ignore the bishop and play 3.g3. After 3...c6 4.♗g2 ♘d7 5.♘f3 ♘gf6 6.0-0 e6 7.d3, White is in a solid **Réti** variation that does not give an him an objective advantage, but at the same time may be appealing to play for someone who likes to open with 1.b3.

3. e2-e3



As Fischer demonstrated in his 1971 match with Petrosian, 3.♘f3 is less precise as it can be met by 3...f6!, and Black takes possession of the centre.
After 3.e3, Black must decide if he will develop the b8 knight to c6 in a type of **Nimzo-Indian** with reversed colours,

or otherwise play ...♘f6 along the lines of the **Queen's Indian**.

Whenever White opts for ♘f3, the resulting position is classified as part of the **Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack**. The legendary author of *My System* preferred to play this opening with an initial 1.♘f3, and only then start to establish the queenside fianchetto on the second move: he played 27 games with this move sequence compared to three games with 1.b3. It is for this reason that set-ups with ♘f3 and b3 are associated with his name.

It is important to note that with the sequence beginning with 1.b3, Black has the opportunity to play 1...e5. However, White now has the interesting option of f2-f4 before developing the knight to f3, creating positions that are often reached by means of **Bird's Opening 1.f4**.

Another reminder that opening theory is holistic and that its division into rigid compartments is only to aid teaching and classification.

A1) 3. ... ♘b8-c6
4. ♘g1-f3

As mentioned, 4.f4 is worth considering: following 4...a6!? 5.♘f3 ♗g4 6.♗e2 e6 7.0-0 ♘f6 8.♘e5 ♗xe2 9.♕xe2 ♖c8 10.d3 ♗d6 11.♘d2, White has an unpleasant initiative on the kingside.

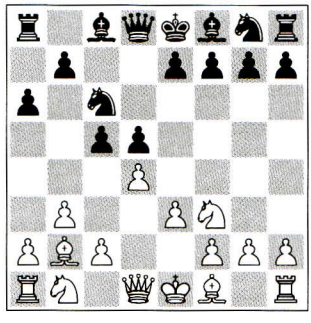
4. ... a7-a6!?

Preventing the annoying ♗b5 and preparing the hoped-for thematic ...d5-d4 advance.

4...♘f6 transposes to the following variation.

The natural-looking 4...♗g4 is risky: after 5.♗b5 ♘f6 6.h3 ♗h5 7.g4 ♗g6 8.♘e5, we are in a reverse variation of the **Queen's Indian** where the extra tempo makes a difference.

5. d2-d4!



In the corresponding **Petrosian Variation** of the Queen's Indian, Black plays the pawn to d5. Now if this is good with one tempo less ...

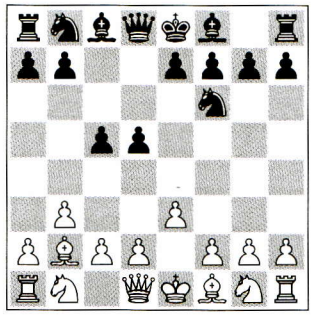
5. ... c5xd4
6. ♘f3xd4

6.exd4!? is playable.

6. ... ♘g8-f6
7. c2-c4!?

with a complex game that offers something for both players.

A2) 3. ... ♘g8-f6



Now White has two options, even though transpositions from one to the other are common.

A21) 4. ♘g1-f3 e7-e6!?

Delaying the development of the other knight so that ♗b5 is no longer effective.

4...♘c6 is playable and frequently enters the following line after White plays ♗xc6 followed by ♘e5 and f4.

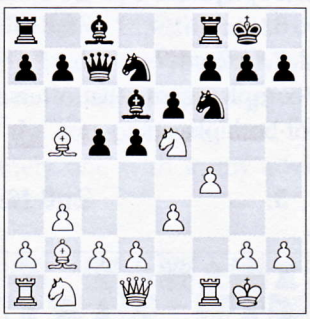
5. ♘f3-e5!?

5.♗b5+ ♗d7 has not scored so well, while 5.c4 is an appealing alternative. After 5...♘c6 6.♗e2 ♗e7 7.0-0 0-0, we are in a previously discussed position from the **Orthodox Variation** of the **Réti** (page 44).

5. ... ♘b8-d7

Some also choose to invest a tempo in 5...a6, so as to not have to worry about all the implications of ♗b5.

6. ♗f1-b5 ♗f8-d6
7. 0-0 0-0
8. f2-f4 ♕d8-c7!



The e5 knight is now being attacked three times, and White cannot maintain it on this outpost without exchanging the b5 bishop for the d7 knight; if this happens Black does not have any problems.

A22) 4. f2-f4 e7-e6
5. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6

5...♗d6 , in the same spirit as the previous variation, is probably more prudent.

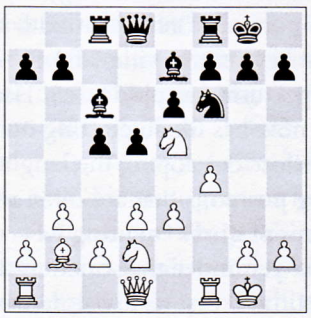
6. ♗f1-b5 ♗c8-d7

It is always best to avoid doubled c-pawns.

7. 0-0 ♗f8-e7
8. ♗b5xc6!?

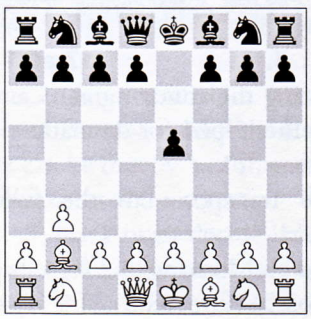
So as to get the knight on e5.

8. ... ♗d7xc6
9. ♘f3-e5 ♖a8-c8
10. d2-d3 0-0
11. ♘b1-d2



with a potentially dangerous initiative, as demonstrated by Fischer in his brilliant victory over Mecking in 1970, and by Nimzowitsch's win against Spielmann in 1927!!

B) 1. ... e7-e5
2. ♗c1-b2



Now what is the best way for Black to defend e5?

2. ... ♘b8-c6

The most combative move: Black keeps open the option of pushing the other centre pawn two squares.

Though played less often, the more solid 2...d6 is also good. Black closes in his bishop but avoids the problems associated with seizing and maintaining too big a centre.

The downside is that White has a greater choice of playable lines to choose from:

- 1 – play c2-c4 with a transposition to the English;
- 2 – a kingside fianchetto;
- 3 – an immediate d4 advance to activate the queen;
- 4 – the most popular choice of 3.e3, with the possible continuation 3...♘f6 4.d4 ♘bd7 5.c4 c6 6.♘f3 e4!? 7.♘fd2 d5, which produces a complicated position that continues to defy easy assessment.

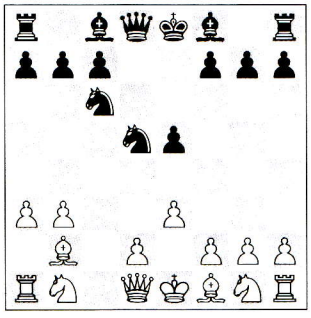
  The strategic themes (with reversed colours) are the same as those for the **Advance Variation** of the **French**: the pawn structure provides attacking possibilities, but Black's centre, if sufficiently attacked, risks crumbling.

3. e2-e3

The move that is most in keeping with the spirit of the opening.

Those of you who prefer to steer away from the sharp lines that follow can always play 3.c4, which prevents Black from aligning his pawns, and go into **English 1...e5** positions.

After 3...♘f6 4.e3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.a3,

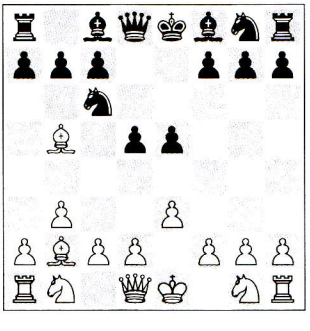


we are in a type of **Paulsen Variation** with reversed colours. It is difficult to quantify the impact of the extra tempo.

3. ... d7-d5

Black wastes no time in occupying the centre. The merits of the curious line 3...♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗d6!? have not been fully evaluated. However, this is by no means because it is a novelty; it was played by **Anderssen** as far back as **1859** (!!).

4. ♗f1-b5



With this move we are in an **Owen's Defence** (1.e4 b6) with **reversed colours**, and the extra tempo will make a difference. The e5 pawn is hanging, and if Black defends it with the bishop he will have problems with the safety of his g7 pawn.

4. ... ♗f8-d6

4...f6 is another possibility that guarantees the safety of the g7 pawn: following 5.d4 e4 6.c4 a6 7.♗xc6+ bxc6 8.♘e2, the position is reminiscent of a reverse **Winawer French**.

5. f2-f4

Black cannot capture on f4 as White's bishop will win the g7 pawn and with it the h8 rook.

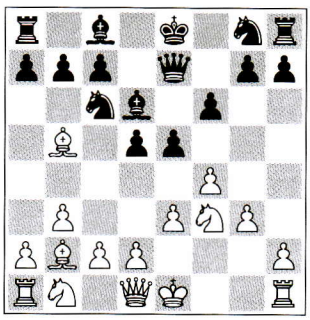
5.c4 is a good alternative for those who prefer a quieter life. Following 5...♘f6 6.♘f3 ♕e7 (6...e4!? is feasible but risky) 7.c5! ♗xc5 8.♘xe5 0-0! 9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.♗xc6 ♖b8, Black has good compensation for the pawn.

5. ... ♕d8-h4+

Before defending e5 with an immediate 5...♕e7, Black weakens White's kingside light-square complex.

Few choose 5...f6, even though after 6.♕h5+ g6 7.♕h4 exf4! 8.exf4 ♔f7!, Black's position is perfectly acceptable.

6. g2-g3 ♕h4-e7
7. ♘g1-f3 f7-f6!



A novelty (so to speak!) from the 1970's. It is now preferred to the classical 7...♗g4, which nonetheless remains playable: after 8.fxe5 ♗xe5 9.♗xe5 ♗xf3 10.♕xf3 ♕xe5 11.♘c3 ♘f6, the position is balanced.

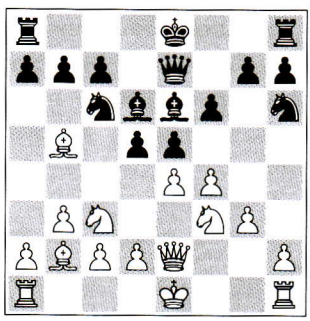
Note that the diagram move is a pawn sacrifice (after the double capture on e5 the check on h5 regains the piece). Generally, White declines the pawn:

8. ♘b1-c3

Indeed, 8.fxe5 is risky: 8...fxe5 9.♗xc6+! (*the immediate 9.♘xe5? does not work because of the curious tactical sequence 9...♗xe5 10.♗xc6+ ♔d8!!*) 9...bxc6 10.♘xe5 ♘f6! 11.♘xc6 ♕e4 (now you appreciate the worth of the check on h4) 12.0-0 ♗h3 13.♖f2 ♘g4, and it is not clear if the compensation for the two pawns is sufficient, but in practice there are few human players who enjoy the prospect of playing this sort of position with the white pieces.

The best response to Keene's 8.♕e2 is the good 8...♘h6! (frequently transposing), which indirectly defends e5: after the final check on h5 there is ♘f7, winning a piece.

8. ... ♗c8-e6
9. ♕d1-e2 ♘g8-h6
10. e3-e4!?



The position is complicated and anything could happen, regardless of whether Black opens the game with **10...exf4**, or keeps it closed with **10...d4 11.♘d5 ♕d7**.

Benko,Pal
Tal,Mikhail
Curacao ct 1962 (3)

1.g3 g6 2.♗g2 ♗g7 3.d4 d6 4.e4 ♘f6 5.♘e2 0-0 6.0-0 ♘bd7 7.♘bc3 c6 8.a4 a5 9.b3 ♖e8 10.♗a3 ♕c7 11.♕d2 e5 12.♖ad1 exd4 13.♘xd4 ♘c5 14.f3 b6 15.♘de2 ♗f8 16.♗b2 ♕e7 17.♘d4 ♗b7 18.♖fe1 ♗g7 19.f4 ♖ad8 20.♗f3 ♕d7 21.♕g2 d5 22.e5 ♘fe4 23.♘xe4 dxe4 24.♗e2 ♕e7 25.♗a3 f6 26.♗c4+ ♔h8 27.♘e6 ♖d5 28.♗xd5 cxd5 29.♘xg7 ♔xg7 30.exf6+ ♕xf6 31.♕f2 ♘e6 32.♕xb6 ♗a8 33.♗d6 ♕f5 34.♕xa5 ♔h6 35.c4 ♖d8 36.♗e7 e3 37.♖xe3 ♖e8 38.♗g5+ ♔g7 39.♖de1 ♘xg5 40.fxg5 ♖f8 41.♕a7+ 1-0

Benko,Pal
Fischer,Robert
Curacao ct 1962 (1)

1.g3 ♘f6 2.♗g2 g6 3.e4 d6 4.d4 ♗g7 5.♘e2 0-0 6.0-0 e5 7.♘bc3 c6 8.a4 ♘bd7 9.a5 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘c5 11.h3 ♖e8 12.♖e1 ♘fd7 13.♗e3 ♕c7 14.f4 ♖b8 15.♕d2 b5 16.axb6 axb6 17.b4 ♘e6 18.b5 ♘xd4 19.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 20.♕xd4 c5 21.♕d2 ♗b7 22.♖ad1 ♖e6 23.e5 ♗xg2 24.♔xg2 ♕b7+ 25.♔f2 ♖d8 26.exd6 ♘f6 27.♖xe6 fxe6 28.♕e3 ♔f7 29.♕f3 ♕b8 30.♘e4 ♘xe4+ 31.♕xe4 ♖d7 32.♕c6 ♕d8 33.♔f3 ♔g7 34.g4 e5 35.fxe5 ♖f7+ 36.♔g2 ♕h4 37.♖f1 ♖xf1 38.♔xf1 ♕xh3+ 39.♕g2 ♕e3 40.♕e2 ♕h3+ 1-0

Azmaiparashvili,Zurab
Lastin,Alexander
Tripoli Wch rapid 2004 (2)

1.g3 d5 2.♗g2 c6 3.d3 ♗g4 4.h3 ♗h5 5.♘f3 ♘d7 6.e4 e6 7.0-0 ♗d6 8.♕e2 ♘e7 9.b3 0-0 10.♗b2 a5 11.a4 ♗e5 12.d4 dxe4 13.dxe5 exf3 14.♗xf3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♘g6 16.♕e3 ♕c7 17.♖e1 ♖fd8 18.♘a3 b5 19.axb5 cxb5 20.♕e2 b4 21.♘c4 ♘e7 22.♖a2 ♘b8 23.♘d6 ♘bc6 24.♕f3 ♘g6 25.♘c4 ♖d5 26.h4 ♖ad8 27.♕e2 h6 28.♖aa1 ♘ge7 29.♖ad1 ♘f5 30.♖xd5 ♖xd5 31.♕e4 ♕d8 32.♔g2 ♘a7 33.♖a1 ♕c7 34.c3 bxc3 35.♗xc3 ♘c6 36.♔h3 ♕d8 37.♖a2 h5 38.♖d2 g6 39.♕e1 ♘cd4 40.♗xd4 ♘xd4 41.♕d1 ♘xb3 42.♖xd5 ♕xd5 43.♕xd5 exd5 44.♘b6 d4 45.♔g2 ♘d2 46.f3 ♘b1 47.♔f2 ♘c3 48.♘c4 a4 49.♘a3 ♔f8 50.♔e1 ♔e7 51.♘c2 d3 52.♘a3 ♘e2 53.g4 ♔e6 54.♔d2 ♘f4 55.♔e3 ♔xe5 56.♘c4+ ♔e6 57.♔d2 g5 58.gxh5 gxh4 59.h6 h3 60.h7 ♘g6 0-1

Dinh Duc Trong
Lutz,Christopher
Calvia ol 2004 (11)

1.g3 d5 2.♗g2 e5 3.d3 c6 4.♘f3 ♗d6 5.e4 ♘f6 6.♘bd2 0-0 7.0-0 ♖e8 8.b3 a5 9.a3 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♗b2 ♘bd7 12.♕e1 dxe4 13.dxe4 b5 14.♘h4 ♕b6 15.♗f3 ♗xf3 16.♘hxf3 a4 17.b4 c5 18.c3 ♖ac8 19.♕e2 g6 20.♖fe1 ♗f8 21.♘f1 ♕c6 22.♖ad1 h5 23.♗c1 ♘b6 24.♗g5 ♘h7 25.♗c1 ♗g7 26.♕d3 ♘f6 27.♗g5 ♘c4 28.♖a1 ♘d7 29.♘1d2

♘db6 30.♘xc4 ♘xc4 31.♕b1 ♗f6 32.♗e3 ♗e7 33.♖a2 ♖ed8 34.h4 ♖d7 35.♘d2 ♘xe3 36.♖xe3 ♖cd8 37.♕e1 ♗f8 38.♘f1 ♗h6 39.♖f3 ♖d1 40.♕e2 cxb4 41.cxb4 ♕c1 42.♔g2 ♖xf1 43.♕xf1 ♖d1 44.♕xd1 ♕xd1 45.♖c3 ♕e1 46.♖c5 ♕xe4+ 47.f3 ♕e1 48.♖xb5 ♗e3 49.♖xe5 ♕g1+ 50.♔h3 ♗f2 51.♖xf2 ♕xf2 52.f4 ♕f3 0-1

Lasker,Emanuel
Bauer,Johann
Amsterdam 1889 (1)

1.f4 d5 2.e3 ♘f6 3.b3 e6 4.♗b2 ♗e7 5.♗d3 b6 6.♘f3 ♗b7 7.♘c3 ♘bd7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘e2 c5 10.♘g3 ♕c7 11.♘e5 ♘xe5 12.♗xe5 ♕c6 13.♕e2 a6 14.♘h5 ♘xh5 15.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 16.♕xh5+ ♔g8 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♕g4+ ♔h7 19.♖f3 e5 20.♖h3+ ♕h6 21.♖xh6+ ♔xh6 22.♕d7 ♗f6 23.♕xb7 ♔g7 24.♖f1 ♖ab8 25.♕d7 ♖fd8 26.♕g4+ ♔f8 27.fxe5 ♗g7 28.e6 ♖b7 29.♕g6 f6 30.♖xf6+ ♗xf6 31.♕xf6+ ♔e8 32.♕h8+ ♔e7 33.♕g7+ ♔xe6 34.♕xb7 ♖d6 35.♕xa6 d4 36.exd4 cxd4 37.h4 d3 38.♕xd3 1-0

Tartakower,Savielly
Spielmann,Rudolf
Vienna 1910

1.f4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e3 e6 4.b3 c5 5.♗b2 ♘c6 6.♗b5 ♗d7 7.0-0 ♗d6 8.d3 ♕c7 9.♕e2 0-0-0 10.♘bd2 a6 11.♗xc6 ♗xc6 12.g3 ♘e8 13.c4 f6 14.cxd5 exd5 15.e4 d4 16.b4 g5 17.bxc5 ♗xc5 18.fxg5 ♖g8 19.♖ac1 ♗a7 20.♘b3 ♘g7 21.♘c5 ♗xc5 22.♖xc5 ♘e6 23.♖c4 fxg5 24.♖fc1 ♕b6 25.♘e5 ♕b5 26.♘xc6 bxc6 27.♖xc6+ ♔d7 28.♖xe6 ♔xe6 29.♕g4+ ♔f6 30.♖f1+ ♔g7 31.♕e6 ♖gf8 32.♗xd4+ ♖xd4 33.♕e7+ ♔g6 34.♕xf8 1-0

Canal,Esteban
Müller,Hans
San Benedetto 1957 (3)

1.b3 ♘f6 2.♗b2 d6 3.g3 e5 4.♗g2 g6 5.d4 exd4 6.♘f3 ♗g7 7.♘xd4 0-0 8.0-0 d5 9.e3 c6 10.♘d2 ♘bd7 11.c4 dxc4 12.♘xc4 ♔h8 13.♖c1 ♘e8 14.♕e2 ♘b6 15.♖fd1 ♕g5 16.♘f3 ♕f5 17.e4 ♕e6 18.♗a3 ♖g8 19.♘g5 ♕f6 20.f4 ♘xc4 21.♖xc4 h5 22.e5 ♕f5 23.♗h3 ♕xg5 24.♗xc8 1-0

Suhle,Berthold
Anderssen,Adolf
Breslau match 1859

1.b3 e5 2.♗b2 ♘c6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗d6 5.d3 ♘e7 6.d4 exd4 7.♗xd4 ♘f5 8.♗b2 ♘h4 9.♗f1 b6 10.♘f3 ♘g6 11.♗d3 ♗b7 12.♘bd2 0-0 13.♕e2 ♘d5 14.0-0 ♕e7 15.♗xg6 fxg6 16.♕c4 ♖ab8 17.♕g4 ♖f5 18.♖fe1 ♖bf8 19.e4 ♖f4 20.♕h3 ♘b4 21.♖ac1 g5 22.♕h5 ♗c5 23.a3 ♘c6 24.b4 ♗xf2+ 25.♔xf2 ♖h4 0-1

Larsen,Bent
Spassky,Boris
Belgrade World-URS 1970

1.b3 e5 2.♗b2 ♘c6 3.c4 ♘f6 4.♘f3 e4 5.♘d4 ♗c5 6.♘xc6 dxc6 7.e3 ♗f5 8.♕c2 ♕e7 9.♗e2 0-0-0 10.f4 ♘g4 11.g3 h5 12.h3 h4 13.hxg4 hxg3 14.♖g1 ♖h1 15.♖xh1 g2 16.♖f1 ♕h4+ 17.♔d1 gxf1♕+ 0-1

Nimzowitsch,Aaron
Spielmann,Rudolf
New York 1927 (4)

1.♘f3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.♗b2 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♗b5 ♗d7 6.0-0 e6 7.d3 ♗e7 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♗xc6 ♗xc6 10.♘e5 ♖c8 11.f4 ♘d7 12.♕g4 ♘xe5 13.♗xe5 ♗f6 14.♖f3 ♗xe5 15.fxe5 ♕c7 16.♕h5 h6 17.♖af1 g6 18.♕xh6 ♕xe5 19.♖f6 ♕h5 20.♕xh5 gxh5 21.♘f3 ♖c7 22.♖h6 f6 23.♘h4 ♗e8 24.♖hxf6 ♖xf6 25.♖xf6 ♖e7 26.♔f2 ♔g7 27.♖f4 ♗d7 28.♔e2 e5 29.♖f5 ♖e8 30.♖f2 e4 31.♖f4 ♖e5 32.♔d2 b5 33.g3 ♗h3 34.d4 cxd4 35.exd4 ♖g5 36.c3 a5 37.♖f2 a4 38.♔e3 a3 39.♖c2 ♗f1 40.♖c1 ♗d3 41.♘g2 ♖f5 42.♘f4 ♔f7 43.♖d1 ♔e7 44.♘xd3 exd3 45.b4 ♔d6 46.♔xd3 ♖f2 47.♖d2 ♖f3+ 48.♔c2 ♔e6 49.♖e2+ ♔d6 50.♔b3 ♖d3 51.♖e5 h4 52.gxh4 ♖h3 53.♖h5 ♔c6 54.♖h6+ ♔b7 55.h5 1-0

Fischer,Robert
Mecking,Henrique
Palma de Mallorca izt 1970 (21)

1.b3 d5 2.♗b2 c5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♗b5 ♗d7 6.0-0 e6 7.d3 ♗e7 8.♗xc6 ♗xc6 9.♘e5 ♖c8 10.♘d2 0-0 11.f4 ♘d7 12.♕g4 ♘xe5 13.♗xe5 ♗f6 14.♖f3 ♕e7 15.♖af1 a5 16.♖g3 ♗xe5 17.fxe5 f5 18.exf6 ♖xf6 19.♕xg7+ ♕xg7 20.♖xf6 ♕xg3 21.hxg3 ♖e8 22.g4 a4 23.♘f3 axb3 24.axb3 ♔g7 25.g5 e5 26.♘h4 ♗d7 27.♖d6 ♗e6 28.♔f2 ♔f7 29.♖b6 ♖e7 30.e4 dxe4 31.dxe4 c4 32.b4 ♗g4 33.♔e3 ♖d7 34.g6+ ♔f8 35.gxh7 ♖xh7 36.♘g6+ ♔e8 37.♘xe5 ♗c8 38.♘xc4 ♔d8 39.♘d6 ♖g7 40.♔f2 ♔c7 41.♘xc8 ♔xc8 42.♖d6 1-0

Berkes,Ferenc
Navara,David
Gothenburg Ech-tt 2005 (8)

1.b3 e5 2.♗b2 ♘c6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.c4 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.d3 ♗c5 7.♘f3 ♗g4 8.♘c3 ♗b4 9.♖c1 ♕f6 10.h3 ♗h5 11.g4 e4 12.d4 exf3 13.gxh5 0-0-0 14.h4 ♖he8 15.♗h3+ ♔b8 16.0-0 ♗xc3 17.♗xc3 ♖e4 18.♔h2 ♖xh4 19.♖g1 ♘xc3 20.♖xc3 ♖d5 21.♖g3 ♖dxh5 0-1

Bronstein,David
Tal,Mikhail
Baku ch-URS 1972 (17)

1.b3 d5 2.♗b2 ♗g4 3.h3 ♗h5 4.♘f3 ♘d7 5.e3 ♘gf6 6.♗e2 e6 7.d3 ♗d6 8.♘bd2 ♕e7 9.a3 c6 10.c4 0-0 11.g4 ♗g6 12.♘h4 ♘e8 13.♘xg6 fxg6 14.h4 b5 15.g5 bxc4 16.dxc4 e5 17.b4 a5 18.c5 ♗b8 19.♕a4 ♕e6 20.♖g1 ♘c7 21.♗g4 ♕f7 22.0-0-0 axb4 23.♕xc6 bxa3 24.♕xd7 axb2+ 25.♔xb2 ♗a7 26.♕xf7+ ♖xf7 27.♖gf1 ♗xc5 28.♘b3 ♗a3+ 29.♔c2 ♖e7 30.♔d3 ♖b8 31.♘a5 e4+ 32.♔d4 ♖b4+ 33.♔c5 ♖b5+ 34.♔c6 ♖xa5 35.♖a1 ♖c5+ 36.♔b6 ♘a8+ 37.♔a6 ♖c6+ 38.♔b5 ♖b6+ 39.♔a5 ♖a7X 0-1

Pantaleoni,Claudio
Bruno,Fabio
Cortina 2006 (1)

1.b3 d5 2.♗b2 e6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.f4 ♘bd7 5.♘f3 ♗d6 6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0

♕e7 8.♘e5 ♖e8 9.d3 ♘f8 10.♘d2 ♘6d7 11.e4 f6 12.♘g4 ♘g6 13.g3 f5 14.e5 fxg4 15.exd6 ♕xd6 16.♗xg4 ♘f6 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.♗h5 ♕c5+ 19.♔g2 ♖e7 20.♘f3 d4 21.♘d2 ♖g7 22.♔h1 ♕f8 23.♗f3 ♖b8 24.♕e2 ♘e7 25.♕e4 c5 26.b4 b6 27.bxc5 bxc5 28.♖ab1 ♖b6 29.♘c4 ♗b7 30.♕e2 ♗xf3+ 31.♕xf3 ♖xb1 32.♖xb1 ♕d8 33.♖b7 ♘f5 34.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 35.♕e4 ♕d7 36.♔g2 ♘e7 37.♔f3 ♘d5 38.a3 ♕f7 39.g4 h5 40.h3 hxg4+ 41.hxg4 ♔f8 42.♘d6 ♕d7 43.♘c4 ♘c3 44.♕g6 ♕b7+ 45.♔g3 ♘e2+ 46.♔f2 ♕g2+ 47.♔e1 ♘c3 48.♕xf6+ ♔g8 49.♕xe6+ ♔g7 50.♕d7+ ♔g8 51.♕c8+ ♔g7 52.♕c7+ ♔h6 53.♕d6+ ♔h7 54.♕e7+ ♔g8 ½-½

Karlsson,Lars (Carl-Gustaf)
Reinderman,Dimitri

Gausdal 2006 (9)

1.b3 e5 2.♗b2 ♘c6 3.c4 ♘f6 4.e3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.a3 ♗d6 7.♕c2 0-0 8.♘f3 ♕e7 9.d3 f5 10.♘bd2 ♗d7 11.g3 ♗c5 12.e4 ♘f6 13.♗g2 ♘g4 14.0-0 f4 15.b4 ♗b6 16.b5 ♘a5 17.a4 fxg3 18.hxg3 ♕e8 19.♗a3 ♖f6 20.♗c5 ♕h5 21.♖ab1 ♗xc5 22.♕xc5 ♖af8 23.♘h4 b6 24.♕xc7 ♖6f7 25.♕d6 ♘b7 26.♕d5 ♘c5 27.♗f3 ♗e6 28.♗xg4 ♕xg4 29.♕xe5 ♘xd3 30.♕d4 ♘f4 31.♖be1 g5 32.♘g2 ♘h3+ 33.♔h2 ♕h5 34.♘h4 0-1

Vitor,Antonio
Matamoros Franco,Carlos

Campillos 2006 (6)

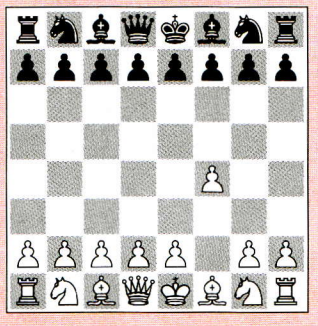
1.b3 ♘f6 2.♗b2 g6 3.♗xf6 exf6 4.d4 c5 5.dxc5 ♗xc5 6.e3 0-0 7.g3 d5 8.c3 ♘c6 9.♘e2 ♗g4 10.♗g2 d4 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.cxd4 ♕a5+ 13.♕d2 ♗b4 14.♘ec3 ♗f3 15.♖g1 c5 16.a3 cxd4 17.axb4 ♕xa1 18.♕a2 ♕xc3+ 19.♘xc3 dxc3 0-1

Petrosian,Tigran
Fischer,Robert

Buenos Aires match 1971 (6)

1.♘f3 c5 2.b3 d5 3.♗b2 f6 4.c4 d4 5.d3 e5 6.e3 ♘e7 7.♗e2 ♘ec6 8.♘bd2 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.e4 a6 11.♘e1 b5 12.♗g4 ♗xg4 13.♕xg4 ♕c8 14.♕e2 ♘d7 15.♘c2 ♖b8 16.♖fc1 ♕e8 17.♗a3 ♗d6 18.♘e1 g6 19.cxb5 axb5 20.♗b2 ♘b6 21.♘ef3 ♖a8 22.a3 ♘a5 23.♕d1 ♕f7 24.a4 bxa4 25.bxa4 c4 26.dxc4 ♘bxc4 27.♘xc4 ♘xc4 28.♕e2 ♘xb2 29.♕xb2 ♖fb8 30.♕a2 ♗b4 31.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 32.♖c7+ ♔e6 33.g4 ♗c3 34.♖a2 ♖c8 35.♖xc8 ♖xc8 36.a5 ♖a8 37.a6 ♖a7 38.♔f1 g5 39.♔e2 ♔d6 40.♔d3 ♔c5 41.♘g1 ♔b5 42.♘e2 ♗a5 43.♖b2+ ♔xa6 44.♖b1 ♖c7 45.♖b2 ♗e1 46.f3 ♔a5 47.♖c2 ♖b7 48.♖a2+ ♔b5 49.♖b2+ ♗b4 50.♖a2 ♖c7 51.♖a1 ♖c8 52.♖a7 ♗a5 53.♖d7 ♗b6 54.♖d5+ ♗c5 55.♘c1 ♔a4 56.♖d7 ♗b4 57.♘e2 ♔b3 58.♖b7 ♖a8 59.♖xh7 ♖a1 60.♘xd4+ exd4 61.♔xd4 ♖d1+ 62.♔e3 ♗c5+ 63.♔e2 ♖h1 64.h4 ♔c4 65.h5 ♖h2+ 66.♔e1 ♔d3 0-1

Bird's Opening 1.f2-f4



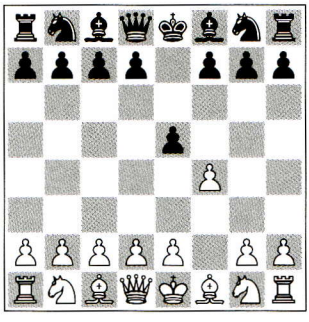
This was played on a couple of occasions by Labourdonnais and Saint Amant in the first half of the 19th century. However, **1.f4** carries the name of the English player Henry Bird, who played it with good results in around 80 games in the second half of the same century. In more recent times, the Dane Bent Larsen showed a certain fondness for this old opening idea.

The f4 pawn controls the important e5-square, and thus 1.f2-f4 is definitely useful. However, it does nothing to promote piece development and it could limit the natural development of the c1 bishop to f4 or g5.

Black, as is always the case when White does not choose a particularly dynamic opening, can take his pick from a wide variety of replies.

The classical approach of occupying the centre remains the most spontaneous and natural option: therefore **1...d5** and **1...e5** are the two most common answers to Bird's Opening. At times Black keeps his cards close to his chest and plays **1...♘f6** and he can continue, after 2.♘f3, with alternatives such as 2...g6!? or 2...d6, with the idea of contesting control of the e5-square. 2...c5 is another possibility; after 3.g3, there are frequent transpositions to the **Closed Sicilian**!

A) 1. ... e7-e5



The famous **From's Gambit**, in honour of the Danish player and theoretician who explored this line in the 1860's.

Black sacrifices a pawn and hopes to exploit the dark-square weaknesses that result from the f2-f4 advance. The objective correctness of this notion is open to doubt, but in the rough and tumble of practical play Black has good chances.

The fact that it is less commonly played than the solid alternative 1...d5 is not necessarily a comment on the gambit's worth, but more because 1. f4 is so infrequent that there are few who can be bothered to study the complications involved with this line. On the contrary, it is highly popular with correspondence players, who relish highly theoretical battles.

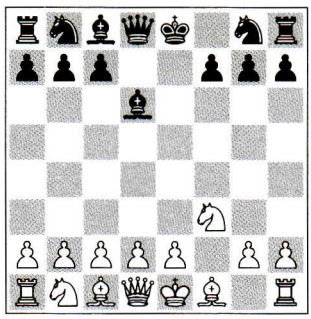
2. f4xe5

Needless to say, Black must remember that White has the possibility to transpose to the **King's Gambit** by playing 2.e4.

2. ... d7-d6
3. e5xd6 ♗f8xd6

The dark-square weaknesses are not of academic concern! Black is threatening mate in three moves starting with 4...♕h4+.

4. ♘g1-f3



Here Black has two methods for developing his attack:

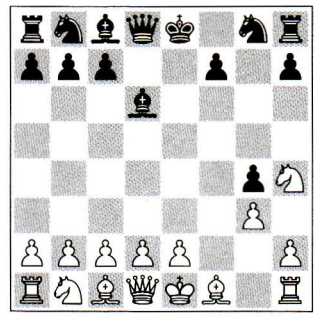
A1) 4. ... g7-g5

The classical **Lasker Variation** has lost most of its old sheen, and it is well on the way to retirement. The threat is obvious: 5...g4 followed by check on h4.

5. g2-g3!

This is better than the old 5.d4 g4 6.♘e5 (certainly not 6.♘g5? f5! as the knight will be lost after 7...h6) 6...♗xe5 7.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 8.♔xd1 ♘c6 9.♘c3! ♗e6 10.♗f4 0-0-0+, and Black seems to have sufficient compensation.

5. ... g5-g4
6. ♘f3-h4



6. ... ♘g8-e7

Heading for g6 to remove the knight on h4, which is standing in the way of Black's initiative.

7. d2-d4 ♘e7-g6
8. ♘h4xg6

The alternative 8.♘g2 ♘c6 9.c3 h5 10.e4 h4 is less clear.

8. ... h7xg6
9. ♕d1-d3

Forced but still good: it deals with the threat of 9...♗xg3+, as now Black would receive insufficient compensation for the pawn.

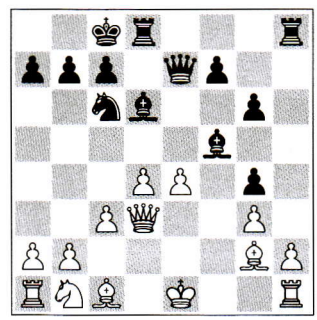
9. ... ♘b8-c6

With the threat of 10...♘xd4.

10. c2-c3 ♗c8-f5
11. e2-e4!

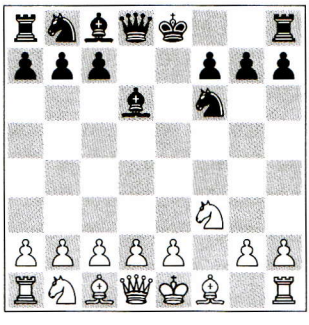
Fearless.

11. ... ♕d8-e7
12. ♗f1-g2 0-0-0



Black's lead in development is menacing, but in fact White's centre is attacked by pieces and not pawns, and it is more solid than one would first imagine. After **13.♗e3!** followed by ♘d2, White can castle on either wing, and finish development with an extra pawn and a nice centre.

A2) 4. ... ♘g8-f6!



The modern **Mestel Variation**: Black is in no rush to gain immediate compensation, and instead continues with normal development.

This reflects the contemporary tendency to make positional sacrifices: for example, the popular **Marshall Gambit** in the **Spanish** is so feared that White often avoids it.

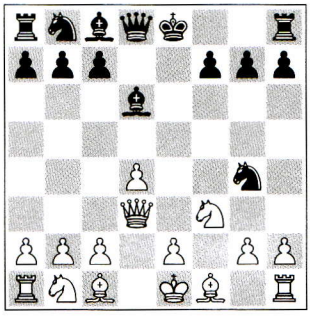
5. d2-d4

Following 5.g3 h5! 6.d4 h4, Black has nice counterplay.

5. ... ♘f6-g4

Black can also continue with the policy of development and play 5...0-0!?, but the text move (with the threat of ♗xh2 followed by ♕h4+) is going to appeal more to the typical **From's Gambit** player.

6. ♕d1-d3



A characteristic defensive move in **From's Gambit**. The queen controls g3 and vacates the d1-square for the king, thus making any idea of a sacrifice on h2 unwise.

Many chess engines suggest 6.e4!? ♗xh2 7.♘xh2 ♕h4+ 8.♔d2 ♘xh2 9.♗c4, with an even game, but a human player will feel uncomfortable with such an exposed king.

6. ... c7-c5!

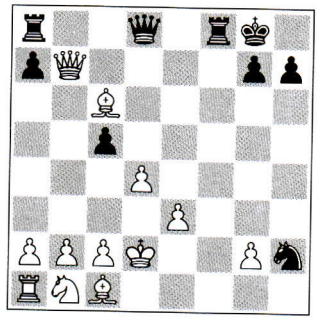
Action in the centre must be taken before White consolidates.

7. ♕d3-e4+

with an unclear position.

Now both 7...♗e7 and 7...♔f8 look feasible. However, a couple of games have continued with the following sequence, which – though not forced – is certainly of great interest:

7.	**...**	**♗c8-e6**
8.	**♘f3-g5**	**♗d6xh2**
9.	**♘g5xe6**	**♕d8-h4+**
10.	**♔e1-d2**	**f7xe6**
11.	**♖h1xh2!**	**♕h4-g5+!**
12.	**e2-e3**	**♘g4xh2**
13.	**♕e4xe6+**	**♕g5-e7**
14.	**♕e6-c8+**	**♕e7-d8**
15.	**♗f1-b5+**	**♘b8-c6**
16.	**♕c8xb7**	**0-0**
17.	**♗b5xc6**	

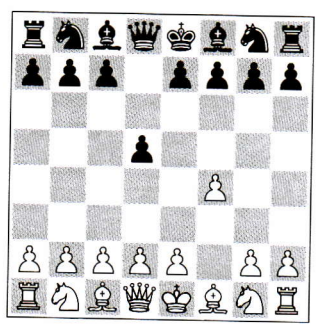


And all hell has broken loose: White is two pawns up and has two bishops in exchange for a rook, but his king is a sitting duck on d2 and the fact that all his queenside pieces are on their original squares is cause for great alarm.

This position is clearly a nightmare to evaluate. The immediate reaction of the recent chess engines is to give White a decisive advantage; then given more time this becomes a healthy advantage; and with even more time just an edge – and in the end equality!

We human commentators will limit ourselves to the cautious annotation 'unclear position'.

B) 1. ... d7-d5



After this move, White is playing a **Dutch with reversed colours**.

White has the advantage of the extra tempo, yet – curiously – the Dutch proper (1.d4 f5) is played ten times more often than the reverse version.

2. ♘g1-f3

After 2.b3, which discourages ...g6, the bishop move 2...♗g4!? has served Black well.

2. ... g7-g6!

If 2.g3 can be considered the best answer to the **Dutch**, it is natural that also here the king's bishop will have an excellent future on the long diagonal.

If Black chooses plans based on 2...c5 3.e3 ♘f6 or 3...♘c6, White can go for 4.b3!, entering positions that we discussed in the section on the **Larsen Opening.**

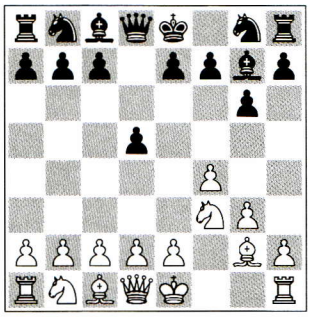
A few players will play 2...♗g4 (or 3...♗g4 after 2...♘f6), with the intention to exchange on f3 and then to prepare the push ...e7-e5. However, it seems a little optimistic to first concede one of the two bishops and then open up the position.

When facing 2...g6 it is only natural that White will adopt the same plans as used in the **Dutch**: fianchetto on the kingside in **Leningrad** fashion, advance his pawns to e3 and d3 (**Classical Variation**), or establish the **Stonewall** with e3 and d4.

B1) 3. g2-g3

The **Dutch Leningrad** is a dynamic and dangerous weapon, and to employ it with an extra tempo would appear to be a good idea. Black should take a restrained approach and avoid excessively sharp lines.

3. ... ♗f8-g7
4. ♗f1-g2



4. ... ♘g8-f6

A very promising alternative is 4...♘h6!? along the lines of ♘h3 against the **Leningrad Dutch**: following 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d4!? (6...c6 is more prudent) 7.c3 c5 8.e4 dxe3 9.♗xe3 ♕c7 10.h3 ♘f5, the game is in balance.

5. 0-0 0-0
6. d2-d3 c7-c5

More solid alternatives such as 6...c6 or 6...b6 are worthy of consideration as well.

7. ♕d1-e1

Needless to say, 7.♘c3 and 7.c3 are also playable, but given the popularity of 7...♕e8 in the **Leningrad Dutch**, it is understandable that also here this queen move is the number one choice.

7. ... d5-d4

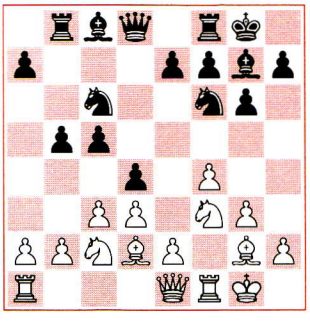
Stopping e2-e4.

8. ♘b1-a3 ♘b8-c6
9. c2-c3 ♖a8-b8
10. ♗c1-d2 b7-b5

In the corresponding **Leningrad**, White takes on c6 with a small plus.

In Bird's Opening, after

11. ♘a3-c2



White should have at the least the same if not more chances, as he has an extra tempo. However, it would be overstating things to say he has an advantage.

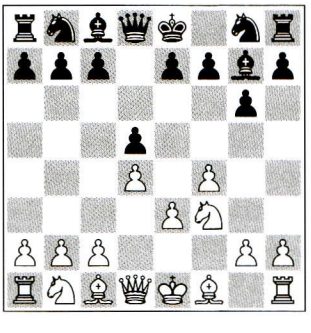
B2) 3. e2-e3

This classical option remains the favourite.

3. ... ♗f8-g7

Now White can choose between two set-ups.

B21) 4. d2-d4



As we saw in Volume 2, the **Dutch Stonewall** (the c6/d5/ e6/f5 pawn wall supplies the metaphor) is a solid but slow system. Therefore it does not seem so bright to play it with the white pieces: its principal defects (a hole on e4 and the passively placed bishop on c1) remain the same, whereas the extra tempo means little in this type of position.

The truth of this is reflected by the curious fact that the results for White with this set-up do not even match Black's comparatively modest performance! However, we do not want to give the impression that an extra tempo is bad for your game; the difference is explained by the fact that lower rated players are more likely to adopt the system and their losses are determined more by Elo difference than opening choice.

We have already pointed out that the **Dutch** is ten times as popular as **Bird's Opening**: it is clear that top players are prepared to play riskier defences with black, but are not willing to compromise the advantage of the extra tempo when playing with the white pieces.

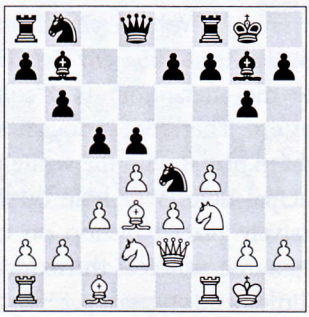
4. ... ♘g8-f6

The natural move, though 4...♘h6 is a good alternative: after 5.♗d3 0-0 6.0-0 c5 7.c3 ♗f5, Black has no problems.

5. ♗f1-d3 0-0
6. 0-0 c7-c5
7. c2-c3 b7-b6

So as to exchange bishops with ...♗a6. Also good are 7...♕c7 and 7...♗f5!?, with the intention of exchanging the d3 bishop, without concern for the resulting doubled f-pawns.

8. ♕d1-e2 ♗c8-b7
9. ♘b1-d2 ♘f6-e4!?

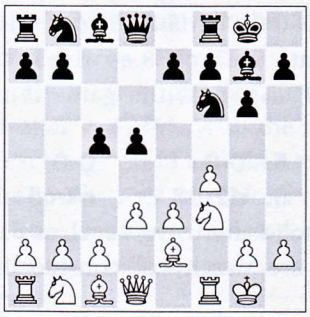


Black should be pleased with the way things are proceeding, *10.♗xe4?! dxe4 11.♘g5 is not on due to 11...♗a6*, and White will be stuck to find a good alternative plan.

B22) 4. ♗f1-e2 ♘g8-f6

As we have learnt from the **Dutch**, developing the knight to h3 (in Bird's Opening 4...♘h6) is less effective against the **Classical Variation** than against the **Leningrad** or the **Stonewall**.

5. 0-0 0-0
6. d2-d3 c7-c5

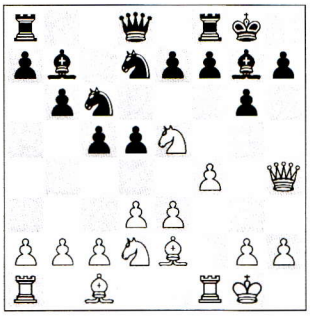


In the **Dutch** the knight is already on c6, and it is therefore obvious that the typical attacking manoeuvre ♕d1-e1-h4 is going to be more effective here, but not to the point that Black should be unduly concerned.

7. ♕d1-e1

7.♘e5!? would be in the same spirit as the **Alekhine Variation** in the **Dutch**, though in this position it is more insidious.

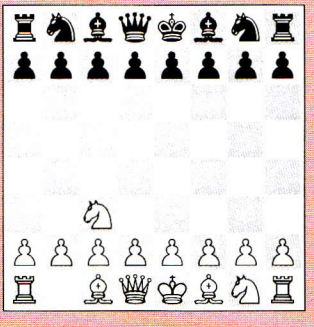
7. ... ♘b8-c6
8. ♕e1-h4 b7-b6
9. ♘b1-d2 ♗c8-b7
10. ♘f3-e5 ♘f6-d7!



White must retreat his knight from e5, with the result that his kingside initiative comes to nothing.

Van Geet Opening

1.♘b1-c3



As far back as 1883, Blackburne gave this opening a whirl. In the 1960's and 1970's, the Dutch master Dick van Geet made some interesting attempts to revive this opening, and he achieved some remarkable results with it.

1.♘c3 is a natural developing move, and as such cannot be too bad. Nonetheless, it has always been viewed with a certain amount of suspicion by experts, and therefore it is little played.

But why, you may legitimately ask, especially when you consider that the other knight opening 1.♘f3 is so popular? The point is that in a **Queen's Pawn Game** (and if Black replies 1...d5 that is exactly what you are playing) it is an accepted wisdom that the c-pawn should remain mobile, and therefore blocking its path with the knight contradicts this precept.

However, the limitations of this dogma become clear when you remember the current popularity of the **Chigorin** (1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♘c6), in which Black cheerfully plonks his knight in front of the c-pawn.

At the beginning of this century, the success top-grade players such as Morozevich and Bauer had with the Chigorin inspired quite a large number of less talented players to follow suit. It can be a good choice for those who just simply want to play a game of chess without getting caught up in a super-analysed and highly theoretical duel so characteristic of the modern Internet age.

Another big plus for 1.♘c3 is that with so many possible transpositions, your adversary will often end up playing out of his repertoire.

Here are a few examples: If Black plays 1...e5, he will need to know how to handle the **Vienna Game** in the event that White continues with 2.e4; if he opts for 1...c5, he must be aware that after 2.e4 he will be playing a **Closed Sicilian**; following 1...d5 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗g5 we are in the **Veresov Opening**; and after 1...d5 2.e4, with 2...c6 we have the **Caro-Kann**; and after 2...e6, the **French**.

In reply to White's first move, Black can play almost every legal move on the board, but the four moves that follow are the most logical to choose from:

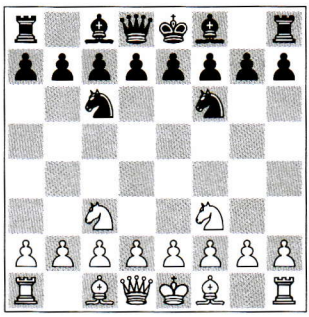
A) 1. ... ♘g8-f6

Black keeps his options open, which could be irritating for White, who is usually hoping for a favourable transposition...

2. ♘g1-f3

After 2.e4 we are in an **Alekhine Defence** declined – 1.e4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 – , which in turn can transpose to the **Vienna** (2...e5) or the **French** (2...d5 3.e5 ♘fd7 4.d4 e6). If instead White decides to go for 2.d4, after 2...d5, we are in Variation D.

2. ... ♘b8-c6!?

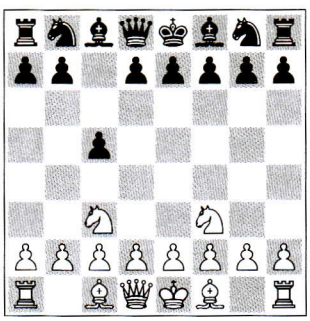


And the pretty set-up in the diagram makes the next remark somewhat unnecessary! After 3.e4 e5 (3...d5!? is possible) we are in the **Four Knights Opening** (Vol.1).

The symmetry resulting from **3.d4 d5** renders the position arid: at least in **Queen's Pawn Game** positions in which the c2-c4 advance has been made impossible, White can apply some pressure to Black with ♗g5 (**Veresov Opening**), with the option of occupying the centre with f2-f3 and e2-e4. Here the presence of the knight on f3 robs the position of dynamism, and Black has no worries.

B) 1. ... c7-c5

2. ♘g1-f3



A logical move: White intends to play d2-d4 in the spirit of the **Open Sicil-**

ian, with the possibility of playing his other pawn to e4 at a later stage or not playing it at all.

2.e4 immediately transposes to the **Sicilian**.

Alternatively, there is 2.d4, with the idea of activating the queen on the kingside. After an initial period of popularity, it was rarely played because after 2...cxd4 3.♕xd4 ♘c6 4.♕h4 d5! 5.e4 ♘b4!, White is forced to give up one of his bishops with 6.♗d3. This is too great a concession with such an open position.

2. ... ♘b8-c6

The second move choice will decide which type of **Sicilian** Black wishes to play. Given the popularity of the **Sveshnikov**, this move is likely.

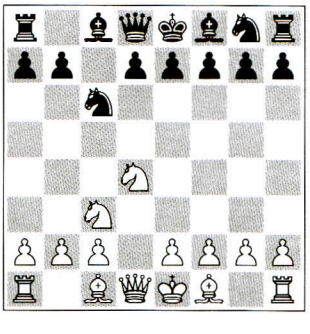
Another favourite is 2...♘f6, with the idea of heading into a **Dragon** or **Najdorf** after 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 – White permitting of course.

For **Paulsen** lovers 2...e6 is a natural move to select.

3. d2-d4 c5xd4

This is more of a reflex reply for **Sicilian** players, rather than a forced move. Indeed, the ambitious 3...d5!? is playable, when White finds himself in a **reverse Chigorin**.

4. ♘f3xd4



As you will note from the diagram, in respect to the **Sicilian** the move ♘c3 has replaced e4.

If White is not keen on transpositions, instead of playing e2-e4, he can fianchetto on the kingside or otherwise play ♗g5 after Black plays ...♘f6.

For his part, Black can avoid going into a **Sicilian** by playing 4...d5, but after 5.e4!? dxe4 6.♘xc6 ♕xd1+ 7.♔xd1 bxc6 8.♘xe4, the arid endgame position marked by a weak c-pawn is probably equal, though not fun to play.

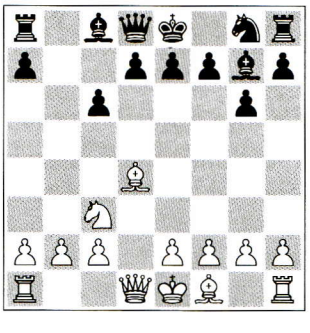
4. ... g7-g6

It is quite natural to head towards this type of Accelerated Dragon, though a Sveshnikov player is more likely to prefer 4...♘f6: at this stage White might decide to be uncooperative and give the interesting 5.♗g5!? a try. However, after 5...e6!, it will difficult to find a better move than 6.e4, which transposes to the **Sicilian**.

5. ♗c1-e3

If White is dead against e2-e4, then he is left with 5.g3 ♗g7 and the knight will have to abandon d4; 5.♘b3 and 5.♘xc6 do not give him anything either.

5. ... ♗f8-g7
6. ♘d4xc6 b7xc6
7. ♗e3-d4

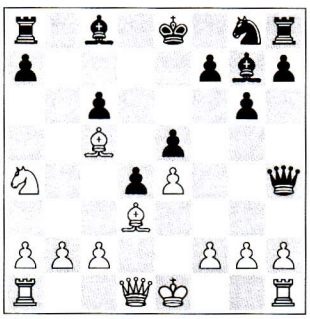


And White tries to exchange off bishops, but this is not going to cause Black difficulties.

7. ... e7-e5!?

Ambitiously occupying the centre regardless of the resulting weaknesses. Following the more solid 7...♘f6 8.♘e4 0-0 9.♘xf6+ exf6, the advantage of Black's better development compensates for his inferior pawn structure.

8. ♗d4-c5 d7-d5
9. e2-e4! d5-d4
10. ♘c3-a4 ♕d8-h4
11. ♗f1-d3



with a complex game that supplies both sides with opportunities.

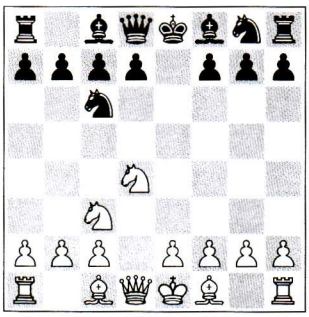
C) 1. ... e7-e5
2. ♘g1-f3

For the alternative 2.e4, see the entry for the **Vienna Opening** in Volume 1 of this series.

2. ... ♘b8-c6
3. d2-d4!?

This is an interesting alternative to avoid entering an **Open Game** (1.e4 e5).

3. ... e5xd4
4. ♘f3xd4



The e2-e4 advance also supplies a transpositional possibility, in this case to the **Scotch Game.**

Trying to stop this advance with 4...d5 looks doubtful as it can be met by 5.♗f4!, with the threat of a ♘db5 follow-up. White almost always avoids a transposition to the **Scotch**, and instead selects from one of the interesting alternatives.

4. ... ♘g8-f6

The most logical move is also the most popular.

The pseudo-active 4...♗c5 allows the strong 5.♘f5, which is somewhat weak in the **Scotch** proper due to 5...d5!: after 5...g6, here we have 6.♗e3!.

4...♗b4 will compromise Black's prospects after 5.♘xc6 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 bxc6 7.♕d4!

5. ♗c1-g5!? ♗f8-b4

This is a natural enough move, but unlike in the Scotch there is not an e4 pawn to attack.

5...h6?! is dubious because of 6.♗xf6! ♕xf6 7.♘db5 ♕d8 8.♘d5, with an advantage for White.

5...♘xd4 6.♕xd4 ♗e7 is too passive, while 5...♗c5 6.e3! (6.♘f5? ♗xf2+) has allowed White to score excellently.

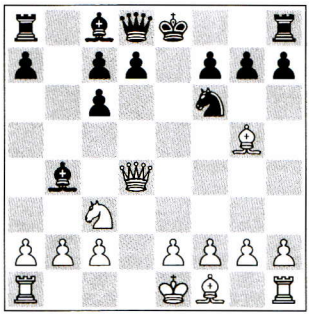
6. ♘d4xc6

6.♕d3, with the idea of queenside castling, is ambitious – perhaps too much so.

6. ... b7xc6

6...♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 bxc6 8.♕d4! does not improve Black's position.

7. ♕d1-d4



7. ... ♗b4-e7

7...♕e7 8.♗xf6 is pleasant for White.

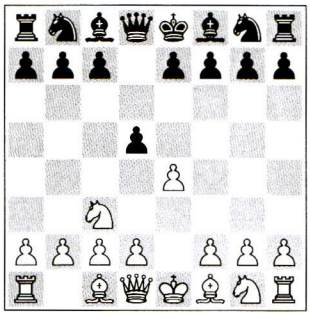
8. e2-e4 0-0

9. ♗f1-d3

With such a complex position, anything could happen.

D) 1. ... d7-d5

2. e2-e4!



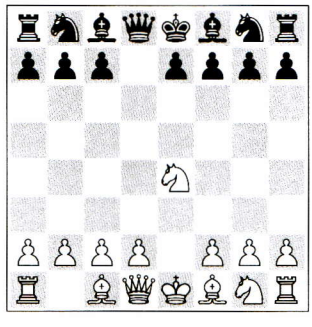
The only move that gives White some possibility of fighting for an advantage. 2.♘f3 is too wimpy, whereas 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗g5 transposes to the **Veresov**, with discouraging performance results.

The position can be reached via the **Scandinavian** – 1.e4 d5 2.♘c3!? – , but as it is more commonly produced by playing 1.♘c3, we preferred to look at it here. At this point 2...e6 and 2...c6 transpose to the **French** and the **Caro-Kann** respectively. Following 2...♘f6 3.e5 ♘fd7 (3...♘e4!? 4.♘ce2!) 4.d4 e6 (4...c5!? is worth a look) we are in the **Steinitz Variation** of the **French**.

D1) 2. ... d5xe4

Conceding the centre but simplifying the position.

3. ♘c3xe4



This position is reminiscent of the main line of the **Caro-Kann** and also the **Rubinstein Variation** in the **French**, with the difference that the white pawn is still on d2 and Black has not played a pawn to either e6 or to c6. This favours Black, as White's d2-d4 push is very natural and difficult to avoid, whereas Black has more useful moves than ...c7-c6 or ...e7-e6.

Now, unsurprisingly, 3...♗f5 and 3...♘d7 in **Caro-Kann** style are the most frequent choices; less frequent is 3...♘f6, reflecting its minor status in the Caro-Kann. Indeed, after an exchange on f6, it is hard to play anything

else except ...c6, with a resulting transposition.

If Black wishes, he can try to prevent d2-d4 by playing 3...e5, but this is a risky business. After 4.♗c4 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗e7 6.d3, White has the freer game.

D11) 3. ... ♘b8-d7
4. ♗f1-c4

White usually steers clear of the natural 4.d4 to avoid transpositions.

4. ... e7-e6

4...♘gf6 is playable, but Black must be prepared to deal with the complications created by 5.♗xf7+!? ♔xf7 6.♘g5+ ♔g8 7.♘e6 ♕e8 8.♘xc7 ♕g6 9.♘xa8, with an unclear position.

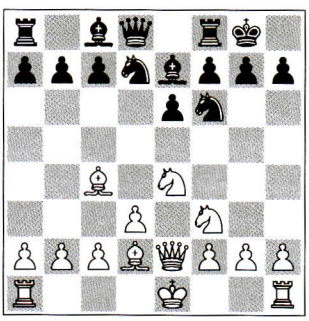
5. ♘g1-f3 ♘g8-f6
6. d2-d3

Here it is better to not be obstinate and permit a transposition to the French with 6.♘xf6+! ♘xf6 7.d4. It is true that in the resulting **Rubinstein Variation** – 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 – the ideal square for the bishop is d3. On the other hand, the lines with ♗c4 give White some chances for gaining an advantage.

6. ... ♗f8-e7
7. ♕d1-e2!?

With the option of queenside castling.

7. ... 0-0
8. ♗c1-d2



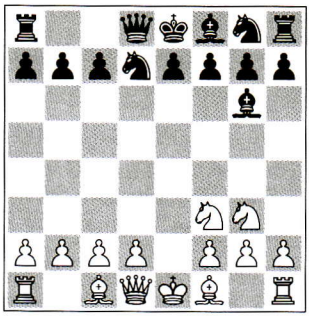
A double-edged position: White can castle kingside and content himself with a small space advantage, or otherwise castle queenside and launch a kingside attack.

Now Black's best idea is probably

8. ... a7-a6

so as to discourage the latter dangerous possibility.

D12) 3. ... ♗c8-f5
4. ♘e4-g3 ♗f5-g6
5. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-d7



6. ♗f1-c4

If White offers Black the chance to go into a **Caro-Kann** with the move 6.d4, after 6...e6 7.h4 h6 8.h5 ♗h7 9.♗d3 ♗xd3 10.♕xd3 ♘gf6 11.♗d2, Black will play 11...c5! and make this freeing advance in only one move.

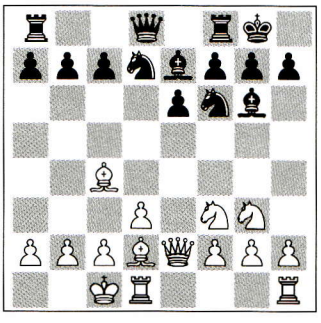
With the text move, White is attempting to demonstrate that there are advantages attached to not advancing his pawn to d4!

6. ... e7-e6
7. d2-d3

Here's the idea: the g6 bishop is biting on granite and White's king will be better protected after he castles on the queenside.

7. ... ♘g8-f6

8. ♕d1-e2 ♗f8-e7
9. ♗c1-d2 0-0
10. 0-0-0



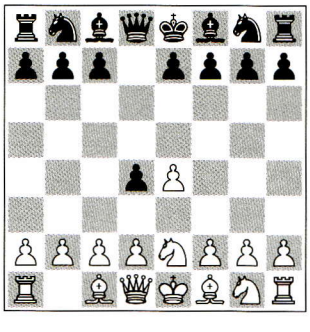
The game is dynamically balanced: we have opposite-side castling and each player's pawns are ready to march to the attack. Anything could happen.

D2) 2. ... d5-d4

The most ambitious choice.

3. ♘c3-e2

Looking for a brighter future on the kingside!



This position is strategically complex and we are only at the third move!

Black has the advantage of having more space and after playing his pawn to e5 he will have occupied the centre, with easy development of his pieces.

However, White has his trumps too: his pawn structure will facilitate a kingside initiative. It is worth remembering that in the **Mar del Plata** line of the **King's Indian** (Vol. 3) when the c6 knight is attacked by the d5 pawn, it retreats to e7, and the e5 pawn becomes the lynchpin for aggressive action on the kingside.

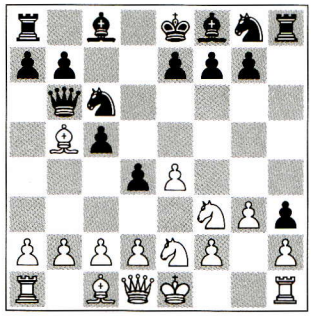
D21) 3. ... c7-c5

Uncommon but playable. Now White can continue with 4.d3 followed by g3-♗g2-f4 etc., but usually he opts for:

4. ♘e2-g3 ♘b8-c6
5. ♘g1-f3 h7-h5!?

Risky but promising.

6. ♗f1-b5 h5-h4
7. ♘g3-e2 h4-h3
8. g2-g3 ♕d8-b6



The positionally complicated nature of this game explains the differing evaluations of the various chess engines.

D22) 3. ... e7-e5
4. ♘e2-g3

This seems to be the best way to relieve the congestion of White's pieces.

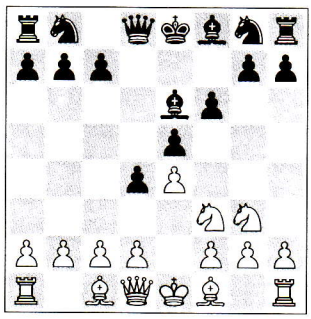
4.f4 is playable but it gives Black the e5-square: following 4...exf4! 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.♘xf4 g5!, Black is fine. 4.♘f3 ♘c6! 5.♘g3 h5! does no better; indeed it has allowed Black to achieve optimum results.

4. ... ♗c8-e6!

Although there are many alternatives, this is easily the most played move and the one that outperforms the others: it is a multi-purpose move that prevents ♗c4 and at the same time prepares ...f7-f6 and ...♕d7.

4...♘c6 is less good because of 5.♗b5.

5. ♘g1-f3 f7-f6

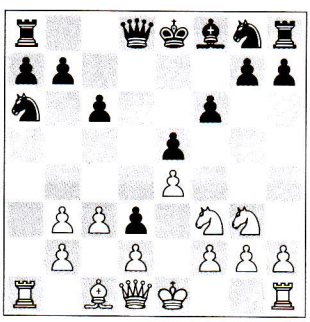


White lacks useful moves: 6.d3 closes in the bishop, which does not appear to have any particularly good squares to go to anyway.

6. ♗f1-b5+!?

Targeting b3... using the Spanish bishop's path of b5-a4-b3.

6. ... c7-c6
7. ♗b5-a4 ♘b8-a6!
8. ♗a4-b3 ♗e6xb3
9. a2xb3 d4-d3!
10. c2-c3



This too is a challenging position to evaluate.

The c1 bishop is under house arrest and the d3 pawn gives the impression of paralyzing White's whole game. However, it is also true that Black will have difficulty in defending it, and an attacking manoeuvre such as 0-0, ♖e1-e3 and ♘e1 could result in its capture.

Taylor,Timothy
Becerra Rivero,Julio
Minneapolis open 2005 (9)

1.f4 e5 2.fxe5 d6 3.exd6 ♗xd6 4.♘f3 g5 5.g3 g4 6.♘h4 ♘e7 7.d4 ♘g6 8.♘xg6 hxg6 9.♕d3 ♘c6 10.c3 ♕e7 11.♗g2 ♗d7 12.♘d2 0-0-0 13.♘e4 f5 14.♘xd6+ cxd6 15.♕e3 ♕f7 16.d5 ♘e5 17.♕xa7 ♖de8 18.♗e3 ♘c4 19.♗d4 ♕e7 20.e4 ♕g5 21.0-0 ♕h6 22.♗xh8 ♖xh8 23.♕d4 ♘e3 24.h4 gxh3 25.♗f3 fxe4 26.♗xe4 ♘xf1 27.♖xf1 ♖e8 28.♔h2 ♕h5 29.♗f3 ♕f5 30.c4 g5 31.g4 ♕c2+ 32.♖f2 ♕c1 33.♕d2 ♕b1 34.b4 ♕a1 35.♕b2 ♕e1 36.c5 ♗b5 37.cxd6 ♔b8 38.d7 ♖d8 39.♕d4 ♗xd7 40.d6 ♖f8 41.♕c5 ♖c8 42.♖e2 ♕xe2+ 43.♗xe2 ♖xc5 44.bxc5 b6 45.cxb6 ♔b7 46.♔xh3 ♔xb6 47.♗d3 ♗e6 48.a3 ♔c6 49.♗f5 1-0

Bird,Henry
Steinitz,Wilhelm
London match 1866 (6)

1.f4 e5 2.fxe5 d6 3.exd6 ♗xd6 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♗g5 ♘c6 6.♘f3 ♗g4 7.e3 ♕d7 8.♗b5 0-0-0 9.♗xf6 gxf6 10.d5

♕e7 11.♗xc6 ♕xe3+ 12.♕e2 ♕c1+ 13.♕d1 ♖de8+ 14.♗xe8 ♖xe8+ 15.♔f2 ♕e3+ 16.♔f1 ♗xf3 17.gxf3 ♗c5 18.♔g2 ♖g8+ 0-1

Larsen,Bent
Zuidema,Coen
Beverwijk 1964 (10)

1.f4 e5 2.fxe5 d6 3.exd6 ♗xd6 4.♘f3 g5 5.g3 g4 6.♘h4 ♘e7 7.d4 ♘g6 8.♘g2 ♘c6 9.c3 h5 10.e4 h4 11.e5 ♗e7 12.♖g1 hxg3 13.hxg3 ♖h2 14.♗e3 ♗f5 15.♘d2 ♗g5 16.♕e2 ♗e7 17.♗f2 ♕d7 18.♘e3 0-0-0 19.♖g2 ♖h1 20.♘xf5 ♕xf5 21.♘c4 ♗g5 22.♖g1 ♖h2 23.♗g2 ♘ge7 24.♗e3 ♘d5 25.♖f1 ♕g6 26.♕xg4+ ♔b8 27.♗xd5 ♖xd5 28.♗xg5 ♕d3 29.e6 ♖xd4 30.exf7 ♖xg4 31.f8♕+ ♘d8 32.♕xd8+ ♕xd8 33.♗xd8 ♖e4+ 34.♔d1 ♖xc4 35.♗g5 b6 36.♗d2 1-0

Taylor,Timothy
Mestel,Jonathan
Lone Pine 1978 (3)

1.f4 e5 2.fxe5 d6 3.exd6 ♗xd6 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.d4 ♘g4 6.♕d3 c5 7.♕e4+ ♗e6 8.♘g5 ♗xh2 9.♘xe6 ♕h4+ 10.♔d2 fxe6 11.♖xh2 ♕g5+ 12.e3 ♘xh2 13.♕xe6+ ♕e7 14.♕c8+ ♕d8 15.♗b5+ ♘c6 16.♕xb7 0-0 17.♗xc6 ♖b8 18.♕d7 ♕f6 19.♘c3 cxd4 20.exd4 ♖bd8 21.♘e4 ♕g6 22.♗d5+ ♔h8 23.♕e7 ♕xg2+ 24.♔c3 ♖fe8 25.♕g5 ♕f3+ 26.♔c4 ♕e2+ 27.♔c3 ♕f3+ 28.♔c4 ♕e2+ 29.♔c3 ♘f3 30.♕f5 ♖xd5 31.♕xd5 ♖xe4 32.♗f4 h6 33.♕f5 ♘xd4 34.♕f8+ ♔h7 35.♖c1 ♘b5+ 36.♔b3 ♕c4X 0-1

Bird,Henry
Lasker,Emanuel
Newcastle upon Tyne 1892 (2)

1.f4 e5 2.fxe5 d6 3.exd6 ♗xd6 4.♘f3 g5 5.d4 g4 6.♘e5 ♗xe5 7.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 8.♔xd1 ♘c6 9.♗f4 ♗e6 10.e3 ♘ge7 11.♗b5 0-0-0+ 12.♔c1 ♗d5 13.♖g1 a6 14.♗e2 ♗e6 15.♘c3 h6 16.♗d3 ♘g6 17.♗xg6 fxg6 18.♖d1 ♖de8 19.e4 g5 20.♗g3 ♖hf8 21.b3 h5 22.♖d2 h4 23.♗f2 ♘xe5 24.♗e3 h3 25.♗xg5 g3 26.hxg3 ♖f1+ 27.♔b2 ♖xa1 28.♔xa1 h2 29.♖d1 ♘g4 30.♖h1 ♗f7 31.♔b2 c6 32.♔c1 ♗g6 33.♔d2 ♖xe4 34.♘d1 ♖d4+ 35.♔e2 ♖xd1 36.♖xd1 ♗e4 37.♖d8+ ♔c7 38.♖d1 ♗xg2 39.♗d8+ ♔c8 40.♗b6 ♗d5 0-1

Chekhov,Valery
Klovans,Janis
Tashkent 1987

1.f4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.e3 g6 4.d4 ♗g7 5.♗d3 0-0 6.0-0 ♗f5 7.♗xf5 gxf5 8.♗d2 ♘e4 9.♗e1 c5 10.c3 ♕b6 11.♕e2 ♘c6 12.♗h4 ♖ac8 13.♔h1 ♖fd8 14.♘a3 ♖d6 15.♘b5 ♖g6 16.dxc5 ♕xc5 17.♖fd1 a6 18.♘bd4 ♘xd4 19.cxd4 ♕c7 20.♕e1 ♖c6 21.♘d2 ♖c2 22.♘xe4 fxe4 23.♖d2 ♕a5 24.♖xc2 ♕xe1+ 25.♖xe1 ♖xc2 26.♗xe7 ♖xb2 27.♖c1 ♗f8 28.♗f6 ♖b6 29.♗e5 f6 30.♗b8 ♖b4 31.g4 ♖c4 32.♖g1 ♔f7 33.h4 ♖c8 34.♗a7 ♖c3 35.♖g3 ♗d6 36.♔g2 b5 37.g5 b4 38.h5 ♖c2+ 39.♔h3 fxg5 40.♖xg5 ♖xa2 41.♖xd5 ♔e6 42.♖g5 ♖d2 43.♖a5 b3 44.♖xa6 ♖a2 45.♖b6 ♖xa7 46.♖xb3 ♖a3 47.♖xa3 ♗xa3 48.♔g4 ♔f6 49.♔g3 ♔f5 50.d5 h6 0-1

Taylor,Timothy
Fontaine,Robert
Las Vegas Masters 2006 (1)

1.f4 d5 2.♘f3 g6 3.e3 ♗g7 4.♗e2 ♘f6 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 c5 7.a4 ♘c6 8.♘a3 ♗g4 9.c3 ♖c8 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 d4 12.cxd4 cxd4 13.e4 ♘d7 14.♗d2 ♗h6 15.g3 ♘c5 16.♗g4 e6 17.f5 ♗e3+ 18.♗xe3 dxe3 19.♕c1 exf5 20.exf5 e2 21.♗xe2 ♕d4+ 22.♔h1 ♖ce8 23.♘b5 ♕d5+ 24.♗f3 ♕xf5 25.♗g2 ♕e5 26.♕c4 a6 27.♘c3 ♕d6 28.b4 ♘d7 29.♖f4 ♖e3 30.♖af1 ♘ce5 31.♕d4 ♕xd4 32.♖xd4 ♖xg3 33.♖d1 ♖c8 34.♘e4 ♖e3 35.♘d6 ♖c2 36.♘c4 ♖ee2 37.♗xb7 ♖h2+ 38.♔g1 ♖xh3 39.b5 axb5 40.axb5 ♖g3+ 41.♔f1 ♘g4 42.♖d2 ♖c1+ 43.♔e2 ♘de5 44.♖b2 ♖gg1 45.♘xe5 ♘xe5 46.b6 ♖b1 47.♖xb1 ♖xb1 48.♖d6 ♔f8 49.♗a8 ♔e7 50.♖d5 ♖b2+ 51.♔d1 ♘d7 52.b7 h5 53.♔c1 ♖b6 54.♔d2 f6 55.♔e3 g5 56.♔f3 h4 57.♔g4 ♔e6 58.♖a5 ♖b4+ 59.♔f3 ♖b3 60.♔e4 f5+ 61.♔d4 ♖b6 62.♖a1 h3 63.♖e1+ ♔d6 64.♖e8 g4 65.♖h8 ♖b1 66.♔e3 ♔e6 67.♖h6+ ♔e7 68.♔f4 ♖b5 69.♖h5 ♔d6 70.♖h6+ ♔c7 71.♖c6+ ♔b8 72.♖c8+ ♔a7 73.♖h8 ♘b8 74.♖h6 ♖d5 75.d4 ♖xd4+ 76.♔xf5 ♖a4 77.♖h8 ♖b4 78.♖h7 ♖a4 79.♖h8 ♘c6 80.♖h7 ♔b6 81.♖h6 ♔a7 82.♖xc6 g3 0-1

Hickl,Jörg
Züger,Beat
Altensteig 1995 (8)

1.g3 g6 2.♗g2 ♗g7 3.d3 c5 4.f4 d5 5.♘f3 ♘f6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♕e1 d4 8.c3 ♘c6 9.♘a3 ♖b8 10.♗d2 b5 11.♔h1 a6 12.♖c1 ♗b7 13.♘c2 ♕d7 14.h3 e5 15.cxd4 exd4 16.♘a1 c4 17.dxc4 bxc4 18.♖xc4 ♕e6 19.♕c1 ♘e4 20.♗e1 ♖fc8 21.♘b3 ♘e7 22.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 23.♕b1 ♘f5 24.♔h2 ♗d5 25.♖g1 h5 26.♕d3 ♗xb3 27.axb3 ♘c5 28.♕c4 ♕e8 29.b4 ♘e6 30.♕xa6 h4 31.♘xh4 ♘xh4 32.gxh4 ♘xf4 33.♗g3 ♘xe2 34.♖e1 ♖c2 35.♗d6 ♗e5+ 36.♔h1 ♘g3+ 37.♔g1 f6 38.♗xe5 fxe5 39.♕d3 ♖xg2+ 40.♔xg2 ♕c6+ 41.♔xg3 1-0

Pyhälä,Antti
Novikov,Igor
Odessa 1989

1.f4 d5 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 ♘f6 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 c5 7.♕e1 d4 8.c3 ♘c6 9.♘a3 ♖b8 10.♘c2 b5 11.♗d2 ♗b7 12.h3 ♘d5 13.♖c1 dxc3 14.bxc3 b4 15.cxb4 cxb4 16.d4 ♕b6 17.e4 ♘xd4 18.♘cxd4 ♗xd4+ 19.♘xd4 ♕xd4+ 20.♖f2 ♘f6 21.♗xb4 ♘xe4 22.♗xe4 ♗xe4 23.♗xe7 ♖fe8 24.♗c5 ♕d7 25.♔h2 ♗g2 26.♖xg2 ♖xe1 27.♖xe1 a6 28.♗g1 ♖b5 29.♖ee2 ♖d5 30.♖b2 ♖d3 31.♗c5 h5 32.h4 ♔g7 33.♗b4 ♕d4 34.♖bd2 ♖xd2 35.♗xd2 ♔f6 36.♗a5 ♔f5 37.♗c7 f6 38.♗a5 ♔g4 39.♗e1 ♔f3 40.♗a5 ♔g4 41.♗d2 ♕b2 42.♗e3 ♕c3 43.♗a7 a5 44.♗b6 a4 45.♗a7 a3 46.♗g1 ♕b2 47.♖f2 f5 48.♔g2 ♕c3 49.♗h2 ♕c6+ 50.♔f1 ♔h3 51.♔e2 ♕c2+ 52.♔e3 ♕xf2+ 0-1

Blackburne,Joseph
Noa,Joseph
London 1883

1.♘c3 d5 2.e3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 e5 4.♗b5 ♗g4 5.h3 ♗xf3 6.♕xf3 ♘f6 7.d4 e4

8.♕e2 ♗b4 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.♘d1 ♘d7 12.c4 ♗e7 13.♘c3 ♘b6 14.c5 ♘d7 15.♕a6 f5 16.♕xc6 ♖f6 17.♕xd5+ ♔h8 18.f3 c6 19.♕c4 exf3 20.♖xf3 ♕e8 21.♗d2 ♕h5 22.♖af1 ♖af8 23.♘e2 g5 24.♘g3 ♕g6 25.♕c2 h5 26.♘xf5 g4 27.hxg4 hxg4 28.♖f4 ♖8f7 29.♗c3 ♖h7 30.g3 ♕h5 31.♕g2 ♖xf5 32.♖xf5 ♗g5 33.d5+ ♔g8 34.♗d4 ♕h6 35.♖xg5+ ♕xg5 36.dxc6 ♘xc5 37.c7 1-0

Van Geet,Dirk Daniel
Guyt,Jacob
Paramaribo 1967

1.♘c3 d5 2.e4 d4 3.♘ce2 e5 4.♘g3 g6 5.♗c4 ♗g7 6.d3 c5 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.c3 ♘ge7 9.♘g5 0-0 10.♘h5 ♗h8 11.♕f3 ♕e8 12.♘f6+ ♗xf6 13.♕xf6 dxc3 14.♘xf7 ♖xf7 15.♗h6 1-0

Van Geet,Dirk Daniel
Taksrud,Vidar
corr 1983

1.♘c3 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘xd4 5.♕xd4 ♕f6 6.♕a4 c6 7.h4 h6 8.♖h3 ♘e7 9.♖f3 b5 10.♕a5 ♕xh4 11.♗f4 ♘f5 12.g3 ♕g4 13.♘xb5 cxb5 14.♖d3 ♗b7 15.♖xd7 ♗c6 16.♖c7 ♘d4 17.0-0-0 ♖d8 18.♕xa7 ♗d6 19.♗xd6 ♖xd6 20.♖e7+ ♔f8 21.♖xf7+ ♔g8 22.♖f4 1-0

Savchenko,Boris
Safronov,Andrey
Cheboksary ch-RUS 2006 (10)

1.♘c3 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 d6 7.♗xf6 ♕xf6 8.♘db5 ♔d8 9.♘xc7 ♖b8 10.e3 ♕g6 11.♘7d5 ♗f5 12.♕d2 ♗xc2 13.♘f4 ♕h7 14.♖c1 ♗f5 15.♘cd5 ♗d7 16.♗d3 g6 17.♖xc6 bxc6 18.♕a5+ ♖b6 19.♕xa7 cxd5 20.♕xb6+ ♔e8 21.♘xd5 ♗e7 22.♕b8+ 1-0

Pel,Bonno
Teske,Henrik
Pardubice 2006 (1)

1.♘c3 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗b4 5.♘xc6 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 dxc6 7.♕d4 ♘f6 8.♗g5 ♗f5 9.♗xf6 gxf6 10.0-0-0 ♕e7 11.e4 ♗e6 12.c4 ♕a3+ 13.♕b2 ♕xb2+ 14.♔xb2 ♔e7 15.♗e2 ♖hd8 16.♔c3 ♖d6 17.♖d3 c5 18.g4 ♖a6 19.♖b1 b6 20.♖h3 ♖a3+ 21.♖b3 ♖xa2 22.♖xh7 ♖d8 23.f4 ♖d4 24.f5 ♗d7 25.♗d3 ♗a4 26.g5 fxg5 27.e5 ♗xb3 28.e6 ♖xd3+ 29.cxd3 ♗a4 30.♖xf7+ ♔d6 31.d4 cxd4+ 32.♔xd4 ♖a3 0-1

Rare and Very Rare Openings

This is the last chapter in our work on the opening phase of the game of chess. Here we will look at opening ideas that are played less than one time in a thousand, and which thus must be classified as rare.

While opinions on the playability of these 'eccentric' lines may vary, one thing remains constant: an uninspiring performance rate (less than 50%), which is not far above Black's score with regular openings.

In tennis terms, White loses the advantage of the serve and instead simply lobs the ball into the other side of the court. Many choose these openings for their surprise effect, however their poor performance discourages most players and they remain unpopular.

Judging from their alternative names – including an Orang-Utan – , one could presume that many have been involved in the 'evolution' of these rare openings: two or more competing names are the norm. Regardless of the merits of competing claims, we have chosen those that are most commonly used.

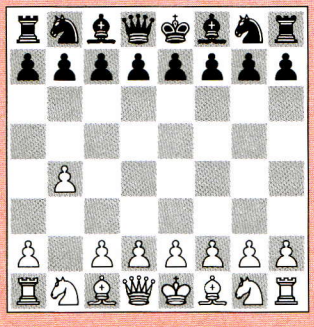
Rare Openings

In the first part of this chapter, we will have a look at the following openings:

- **Sokolsky Opening 1.b4**
- **Grob Attack 1.g4**
- **1.d3**
- **1.e3**
- **1.a3**

Sokolsky Opening

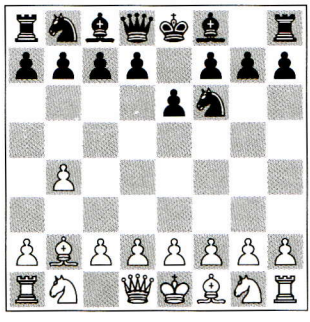
1.b2-b4



This opening got an occasional outing in the 19th century. Tartakower jokingly baptized it the **Orang-Utan**, after spending some inspiring time at the ape enclosures in a zoo the day before he played the opening against Maroczy at the New York tournament of 1924.
This appealing but perhaps apocryphal story has captured people's imagination and the name has stuck. However, most texts prefer the more respectable sounding **Sokolsky Opening**, which honours the Soviet theoretician who wrote a monograph on the subject in the 1960's.

Obviously this eccentric pawn advance is the first step in creating an extended queenside fianchetto, and at the same time it grabs some space on this side of the board.
Black can play almost anything in reply, but clearly moves that contribute to control of the centre or its occupation are the favourites.

A) 1. ... ♘g8-f6
2. ♗c1-b2 e7-e6

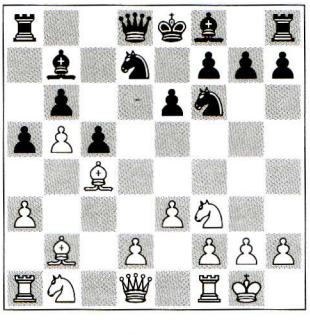


White must lose a tempo to defend b4.
It is curious that all chess engines prefer Black. Though this is probably unwarranted, it is a little discouraging for fans of this opening (not that they are that easily discouraged; an Internet site has been established to promote 1.b4 and defend its honour against the sceptics' attacks!).

3. a2-a3

Some prefer 3.b5, but after 3...d5 4.e3 ♗d6 5.♘f3 ♘bd7, the b5 pawn does not look so useful.

3. ... d7-d5
4. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-d7
5. e2-e3 a7-a5!?
6. b4-b5 c7-c5
7. c2-c4 d5xc4!?
8. ♗f1xc4 b7-b6
9. 0-0 ♗c8-b7



The position is in balance.

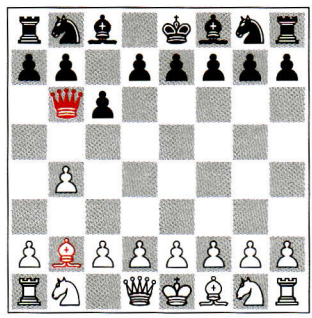
B) 1. ... c7-c6

This contemporary approach stops b4-b5.

2. ♗c1-b2

2.e3!? is worthy of consideration as it robs the following queen excursion of its effectiveness.

2. ... ♕d8-b6



And now we see the point of Black's first move: the b4 pawn is under attack and a subsequent ...a7-a5 advance will put it under further pressure, which is unpleasant for White as the b2 bishop is undefended.

3. a2-a3 a7-a5

4. c2-c4!

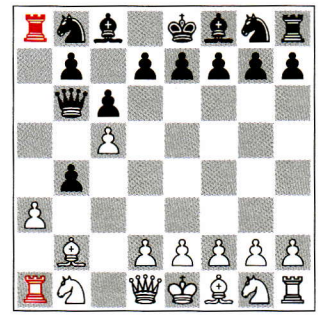
Without this tactic, the Sokolsky would probably be rendered unplayable, given that *4.c3 is not strategically acceptable.*

Later it was discovered that it is also possible to defend the b4 pawn with 4.e3!? axb4 5.♗d4!, since *5...c5? is met by 6.♗xc5! and the tactic mentioned in the comment after 5.c5! also applies here.*

4. ... a5xb4

An almost automatic reply, but 4...d6!? is an alternative that merits consideration.

5. c4-c5!



The point is that now *5...♕xc5?? results in the loss of a rook following 6.axb4 ♕xb4 7.♖xa8 ♕xb2 8.♖xb8.*

5. ... ♕b6-c7

6. a3xb4 ♖a8xa1

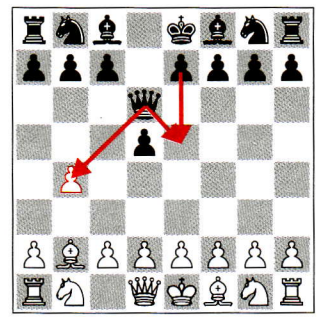
7. ♗b2xa1 ♘b8-a6

8. ♕d1-b3 d7-d6

Chances are about equal.

C) 1. ... d7-d5

2. ♗c1-b2 ♕d8-d6



As in the previous line, the b4 pawn is threatened, but with the additional ambition of occupying the centre with ...e7-e5.

Introduced by Uhlmann in 1980, it was first thought that this move gave Black a plus. However, in reality White can maintain equilibrium.

Another interesting possibility is 2...♗g4!?, which has more or less the

same idea as in the **Larsen Opening** (see page 202); after 3.♘f3 ♗xf3!? 4.gxf3 e6 5.e3 ♘f6, we have an unclear game.

Lastly, 2...♘f6 almost always transposes to Variation A.

3. a2-a3

3.b5 ♕b4 is nice for Black.

3. ... e7-e5

Black has achieved his ambition, but as always with central occupation, the question is how to maintain it.

4. e2-e3 ♘g8-f6

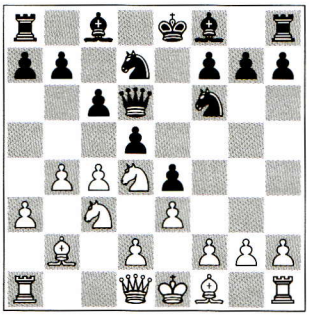
5. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-d7

Black's pawn centre looks imposing, but his pieces are badly coordinated: for example, the bishop would definitely be better on d6 rather than the queen.

6. c2-c4! c7-c6

7. ♘b1-c3 e5-e4

8. ♘f3-d4



and play is balanced.

D) 1. ... e7-e5

2. ♗c1-b2

One of the (few) advantages this line has over the **Larsen** is that now *2...♘c6? results in the loss of a pawn after 2.b5.*

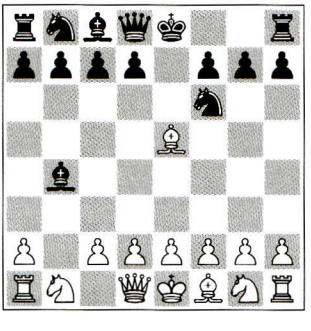
2. ... ♗f8xb4

By far and away the most common continuation. It may seem debatable to exchange a central pawn for a lateral one. However, Black's pieces will develop freely and actively, including the rook which will exert its power along the semi-open e-file.

2...d6 is also frequently seen. This reflects Black's usual unfamiliarity with the Sokolsky: Black intends to develop his kingside bishop and continue in **King's Indian** fashion. After 3.c4 g6 4.e3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 ♘f6 (5...f5!? 6.d4 e4 is worth a thought) 6.d4!, White has been able to score well.

The move 2...f6, which was played by Pillsbury in the 19th century, may be aesthetically displeasing, but it has its logic: it supplies rock-solid support for e5 and the threat to capture the b4 pawn becomes real. Following 3.a3 (the gambit line 3.e4 ♗xb4 4.♗c4 fails to convince) 3...d5 4.e3 (4.b5!?) 4...♗e6 5.d4 ♘d7 6.♘f3, it not clear if Black's centre is strong or weak.

3. ♗b2xe5 ♘g8-f6



Here the chess engines, influenced by Black's lead in development (...♘c6 will earn another tempo by attacking the bishop), estimate Black to have varying degrees of advantage. This is

probably an exaggeration, even if it must be stressed that Black does have a problem-free game.

4. c2-c4

Seeking to prevent the ...d7-d5 advance, but perhaps a more solid approach with 4.e3 0-0 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.♗b2 is more appropriate here.

4. ... 0-0

5. e2-e3 d7-d5!

Black must open up the position if he wishes to exploit his better development.

6. c4xd5

Also 6.♘f3 c5! is good for Black.

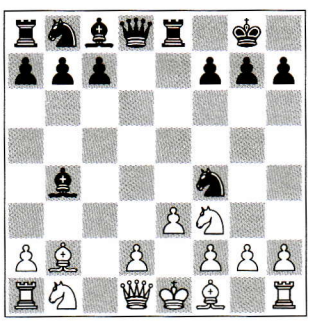
6. ... ♘f6xd5

7. ♘g1-f3 ♖f8-e8

8. ♗e5-b2

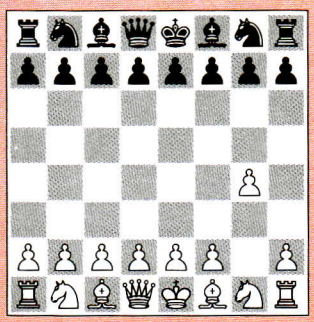
Following 8.♗e2?, there is the surprising 8...♖xe5!! 9.♘xe5 ♕f6, and Black is winning: after 10.f4, Black replies with 10...*♘xe3.*

8. ... ♘d5-f4



Black has an initiative and it will not be easy for White to complete his development, given that after 9.♘e5 Black can play 9...♕g5! with an advantage.

Grob Attack 1.g2-g4



This opening is named after the Swiss international master Henry Grob, who in the 1940's wrote a monograph on this subject, and who further explored its intricacies in hundreds of correspondence games until the 1970's. Of modern players of note, only Michael Basman used it with any regularity (in the 1970's and 80's). This comes as no surprise, given the Englishman's maverick approach to the opening phase of the game.

What is the point of **1.g4** ?

The ambition is to attack on the kingside. Consult any beginner's primer on chess and you will discover that control of the centre is a prerequisite for a flank attack; the problem with the Grob is that White ignores this fundamental principle when he plays this showy advance.

If we take it for granted that 1.g4 is not a useful move, the next question would be whether it actually harms White: here opinions differ. Its supporters cite surprise effect as one of its selling points, but the statistical evidence makes it clear that this is of very limited significance: overall, Black scores better

than White after 1.g4, which is comment enough for most players.

In effect the weakness on h4, and to a certain extent, also on f4, cannot be remedied as pawns cannot move backwards. This is not an academic consideration: 1.g3 has a significantly better performance (16% better!) than 1.g4.

As is natural, the two central pawn advances represent Black's most effective answer, with the d-pawn push the most popular (perhaps because it creates a discovered bishop attack on g4!).

A) 1. ... e7-e5
2. ♗f1-g2 d7-d5

Mariotti's 2...h5!? is also good: 3.gxh5 ♕g5 4.♗f3 ♕h4 5.♘c3 ♘f6.

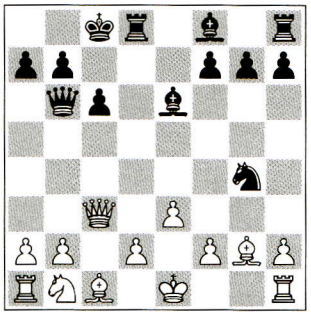
3. c2-c4

Overly ambitious: the lesser evil would be 3.h3, which transposes to Variation B.

3. ... d5xc4!
4. ♕d1-a4+ c7-c6
5. ♕a4xc4 ♗c8-e6
6. ♕c4-c3 ♘b8-d7
7. ♘g1-f3 ♘g8-f6!

Threatening the pawn on g4 and also threatening to play ...♘d5-f4.

8. ♘f3xe5 ♘d7xe5
9. ♕c3xe5 ♘f6xg4
10. ♕e5-c3 ♕d8-b6
11. e2-e3 0-0-0



Black's better development is practically decisive.

B) 1. ... d7-d5
2. ♗f1-g2!?

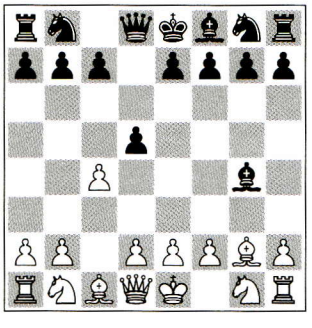
The merits of this sacrifice are open to debate, but there is no doubt that it has the plus of making Black's life more complicated.

After 2.h3 e5 3.♗g2 c6! 4.d3 ♗d6 5.♘d2 ♘e7, Black has a very healthy centre.

2. ... ♗c8xg4

The more prudent 2...e5 transposes to Variation A.

3. c2-c4



♕b3 is on its way and the c4 pawn is immune from capture due to the weakness on b7.

3. ... c7-c6

The most natural move.

Following 3...e6, 4.♕b3 wins back the pawn. Another move to consider is 3...♘f6!? 4.♕b3 ♘bd7 5.♕xb7, with an unclear game.

4. ♕d1-b3 ♕d8-c7
5. c4xd5 c6xd5

5...e6!? 6.dxc6 ♘xc6 could be an improvement.

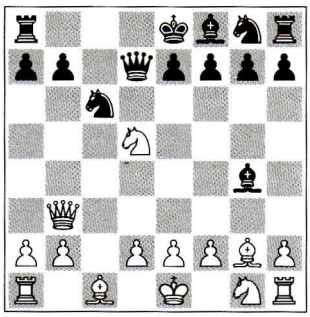
6. ♘b1-c3

The c1 bishop was hanging.

6. ... ♘b8-c6!

Obviously, not 6...e6?? 7.♕a4+, picking up the g4 bishop.

7. ♘c3xd5 ♕c7-d7



with balanced play.

16.♘e5 ♗xe5 17.fxe5 ♘f7 18.d4 ♘g5 19.c4 ♗a6 20.♖e1 ♕a8 21.♗c3 ♖b8 22.♕c2 ♘e4 23.♗d3 ♖b7 24.♖c1 ♘b6 25.♗e1 h6 26.♗xe4 dxe4 27.♕c3 ♘d7 28.♖b1 ♖xb1 29.♘xb1 ♕b7 30.♘a3 ♕b6 31.♗d2 ♔f7 32.g3 ♘f8 33.♕b4 ♕xb4 34.♗xb4 ♘d7 35.♗a5 g5 36.♔f2 ♔e8 37.♔e2 c5 38.♘b5 ♔f7 39.♔d2 cxd4 40.exd4 f4 41.♘d6+ ♔g6 42.♔c3 e3 43.♔d3 ♘b8 44.♔e4 ♘c6 45.♗c3 e2 46.gxf4 gxf4 47.♗d2 f3 48.♔xf3 ♘xd4+ 49.♔e3 ♘f5+ 50.♔xe2 ♘xd6 51.exd6 ♗xc4+ 52.♔e3 ♗b5 53.♔d4 h5 54.♔c5 ♗a4 ½-½

Tartakower,Savielly
Réti,Richard
Vienna m 1919

1.b4 e5 2.♗b2 f6 3.e4 ♗xb4 4.♗c4 ♘e7 5.f4 d5 6.exd5 ♗d6 7.fxe5 fxe5 8.♕h5+ ♘g6 9.♘f3 ♘d7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♘c3 ♖f4 12.d3 ♘f6 13.♕g5 h6 14.♕g3 e4 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.dxe4 ♗g4 17.♕e1 ♗xf3 18.♖xf3 ♖xf3 19.gxf3 ♕g5+ 20.♔h1 ♕h5 21.♕f2 ♖f8 22.♗e2 ♗e5 23.♗xe5 ♕xe5 24.♖g1 ♘f4 25.♗f1 ♖f6 26.♕xa7 ♖b6 27.d6 ♕xd6 28.♗c4+ ♔h7 29.♕b8 ♘e6 30.♗xe6 ♕xe6 31.♕xc7 ♕f6 32.♖xg7+ ♕xg7 33.♕xb6 1-0

Yudasin,Leonid
Epishin,Vladimir
New York open 1990 (8)

1.b4 c6 2.♗b2 ♕b6 3.a3 a5 4.c4 d6 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.b5 g6 7.♖b1 ♕d8 8.g3 ♗g7 9.♗g2 0-0 10.♘f3 d5 11.bxc6 bxc6 12.0-0 ♗a6 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.d3 ♘c6 15.♕a4 ♖c8 16.♖fc1 e6 17.♘d1 ♕d7 18.♗c3 h6 19.♗xa5 ♘xa5 20.♕xa5 ♖xc1 21.♖xc1 ♕b5 22.♕xb5 ♗xb5 23.♖b1 ♗d7 24.♘e3 ♖a8 25.♘c2 ♗f8 26.d4 ♗a4 27.♘fe1 ♖c8 28.♘b4 ♖c3 29.♖a1 ♘e4 30.♘ed3 ♘d2 31.e3 ♘c4 32.♘c5 ♗xc5 33.dxc5 ♘a5 34.♘a6 ½-½

Tartakower,Savielly
Maroczy,Geza
New York 1924 (4)

1.b4 ♘f6 2.♗b2 e6 3.b5 d5 4.e3 ♗e7 5.f4 0-0 6.♗d3 a6 7.a4 axb5 8.axb5 ♖xa1 9.♗xa1 ♘bd7 10.♘f3 ♘e4 11.0-0 f5 12.♗e2 ♘d6 13.♕c1 ♗f6 14.♘a3 c6 15.bxc6 bxc6

Campora,Daniel
Anguix,Juan Francisco
Canete 1994 (6)

1.b4 c6 2.♗b2 a5 3.b5 cxb5 4.e4 b4 5.a3 bxa3 6.♘xa3 d6 7.d4 e6 8.♗d3 ♘f6 9.♘e2 ♗e7 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.♔h1 ♘b4 12.♗b5+ ♗d7 13.c3 ♗xb5 14.♘xb5 ♘c6 15.♘g3 0-0 16.c4

♘b4 17.d5 exd5 18.exd5 ♕d7 19.♖a3 ♘bxd5 20.♖f3 ♘b6 21.♕d4 ♘a4 22.♗a1 ♘c5 23.♘f5 ♘e6 24.♕h4 ♖fe8 25.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 26.♖xf6 gxf6 27.♗xf6 ♕d7 28.f4 ♘f8 29.♕g5+ 1-0

Miralles,Gilles
Bologan,Viktor
France tt 2003 (6)

1.b4 e5 2.♗b2 d6 3.g3 f5 4.♗g2 ♘f6 5.c4 ♗e7 6.♕b3 0-0 7.♘f3 ♔h8 8.0-0 ♕e8 9.♘c3 ♕h5 10.♘d5 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♘d7 12.d3 ♘f6 13.♖ae1 f4 14.e4 ♗h3 15.d4 ♘g4 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.♗xh3 ♕xh3 18.♗xe5 ♗d6 19.♗d4 fxg3 20.fxg3 ♗xg3 21.♖e2 ♗e5 22.♗c5 ♖f6 23.♖g2 ♘xh2 24.♖xh2 ♗xh2+ 25.♘xh2 ♖g6+ 26.♔f2 ♕xh2+ 0-1

Campora,Daniel
Cheparinov,Ivan
Coria del Rio open 2005 (5)

1.b4 c6 2.e3 ♘f6 3.♗b2 a5 4.b5 a4 5.♘f3 d6 6.♗e2 e5 7.c4 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 e4 10.♘fd2 cxb5 11.cxb5 d5 12.♗a3 ♗xa3 13.♘xa3 ♕d6 14.♕c1 ♗g4 15.♖e1 ♗xe2 16.♖xe2 ♘bd7 17.♕b2 ♘g4 18.♘f1 f5 19.h3 ♘h6 20.♖c1 ♘b6 21.♖c5 g5 22.f3 ♖ae8 23.♘b1 exf3 24.gxf3 ♘d7 25.♖cc2 f4 26.e4 dxe4 27.fxe4 f3 28.♖e3 g4 29.♕c3 ♕g6 30.♘g3 gxh3 31.♖xf3 ♖xe4 32.♖xf8+ ♘xf8 33.♘d2 h2+ 34.♔g2 ♖e2+ 35.♔f1 h1♕+ 0-1

Vidonyak,Roman
Tiviakov,Sergey
Gausdal 2005 (4)

1.b4 e5 2.♗b2 ♗xb4 3.♗xe5 ♘f6 4.♘f3 0-0 5.e3 ♖e8 6.♗e2 d5 7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.♗b2 ♘b6 9.d3 ♗d7 10.♕c1 ♘a4 11.♗a3 ♗a5 12.♘d4 ♗b6 13.♗f3 c5 14.♘e2 ♗c7 15.♘bc3 ♘g4 16.♗xg4 ♘xc3 17.♗f3 ♘xe2+ 18.♗xe2 ♖c8 19.♗f3 ♗e6 20.g3 b6 21.c3 ♕d7 22.♕d1 ♗f5 23.♖e1 ♖cd8 24.d4 c4 25.♗g2 ♗d3 26.♗c1 b5 27.a4 bxa4 28.♖xa4 a5 29.♗a3 ♖b8 30.♗c5 ♖b1 0-1

Skembris,Spyridon
Velimirovic,Dragoljub
Budva zt 1981 (13)

1.g4 e5 2.♘c3 h5 3.g5 d5 4.d4 ♘c6 5.♗g2 ♗b4 6.a3 ♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 ♘ge7 8.♘f3 e4 9.♘h4 ♘g6 10.♘xg6 fxg6 11.c4 0-0 12.♖b1 ♘a5 13.cxd5 ♕xd5 14.♕d3 ♕a2 15.♕b5 a6 16.♕b2 ♕d5 17.0-0 ♗g4 18.c4 ♘xc4 19.♕xb7 c6 20.♖e1 ♕xd4 21.♗f4 ♕d5 22.♗g3 ♘xa3 23.♖bc1 ♘b5 24.♕xc6 ♕xc6 25.♖xc6 ♘d4 26.♖xg6 ♘xe2+ 27.♖xe2 ♗xe2 28.♗xe4 ♖ad8 29.♗e5 ♖f7 30.f4 ♗d3 31.♗xd3 ♖xd3 32.♖xa6 ♖d2 33.g6 ♖fd7 34.f5 ♖d8 35.f6 gxf6 36.♖xf6 ♖e8 37.♗g3 ♔g7 38.♖f2 ♖d4 39.♖f4 ♖xf4 40.♗xf4 ♖e2 41.♗g3 ♔xg6 42.♗f2 ♔f5 43.♔g2 ♔f4 44.h3 ♖c2 45.♔g1 ♔f3 46.♗h4 ♖c4 47.♗g5 ♔g3 48.h4 ♖c2 49.♔f1 ♖f2+ 50.♔e1 ♔f3 51.♗h6 ♖a2 52.♗g5 ♖b2 53.♗h6 ♖b4 54.♗g5 ♖d4 55.♗f6 ♖d5 56.♗g5 ♖d6 57.♗c1 ♖e6+ 58.♔d1 ♔f2 59.♗f4 ♖e4 60.♗g5 ♖d4+ 61.♔c2 ♔g3 0-1

Basman,Michael
Strauss,David
Brighton ch-GBR 1984 (11)

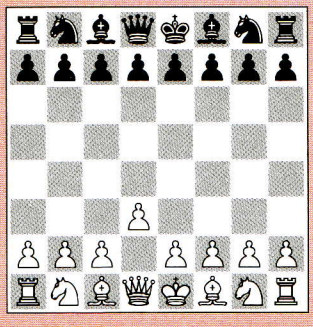
1.g4 d5 2.h3 e5 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 ♘d7 5.c4 dxc4 6.♘c3 ♗d6 7.♘f3

♘e7 8.♘e4 ♗c7 9.♗g5 f6 10.♗d2 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘e5 12.♗c3 ♘d5 13.♕d2 ♘f4 14.♖g1 ♘xg2+ 15.♖xg2 ♕d5 16.♕e3 0-0 17.♖d1 ♖d8 18.♖d2 ♗b6 19.f3 ♘d3+ 20.exd3 ♗xd4 21.♗xd4 ♕xd4 22.♕xd4 ♖xd4 23.dxc4 ♖xd2 24.♖xd2 ♗e6 25.b3 ♔f8 26.♔f2 ♖e8 27.f4 ♗c8 28.♘d6 ♖d8 29.c5 b6 30.b4 bxc5 31.bxc5 ♗e6 32.f5 ♗d5 33.♖b2 a5 34.a3 h6 35.♔e3 ♖a8 36.h4 ♔g8 37.♔f4 ♔f8 38.g5 hxg5+ 39.hxg5 fxg5+ 40.♔xg5 ♔g8 41.♖b7 ♖f8 42.♖a7 ♖f6 43.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 44.♘e8+ ♔f7 45.♘xf6 ♗b3 46.♘g4 ♗d5 47.♘e5+ ♔e7 48.f6+ ♔e6 49.f7 ♔e7 50.♔g6 ♗xf7+ 51.♘xf7 ♔e6 52.♘d6 ♔d5 53.♘b7 ♔c4 54.♔f5 a4 55.♔e4 ♔b3 56.♔d3 ♔xa3 57.♔c3 ♔a2 58.♘a5 a3 59.♘xc6 1-0

Basman,Michael
Rowson,Jonathan
Torquay ch-GBR 1998 (2)

1.g4 e6 2.♘f3 b6 3.e3 ♗b7 4.♗e2 g5 5.♖g1 h6 6.c4 ♘f6 7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.d4 ♗b4 9.♗d2 ♗c3 10.♗c3 ♘e4 11.d5 ♘c3 12.bc3 ♘e7 13.♕d4 ♖g8 14.e4 c5 15.♕e3 ♘g6 16.a4 d6 17.de6 fe6 18.e5 de5 19.♘e5 ♕c7 20.♘g6 ♖g6 21.0-0-0 ♖f6 22.♖g3 ♖d8 23.♖d8 ♔d8 24.♗f3 ♔e7 25.♗b7 ♕b7 26.♔b2 ♕h1 27.h3 ♕f1 28.♖f3 ♕c4 29.♖f6 ♔f6 30.♔a3 a6 31.♕f3 ♔g6 32.♔b2 ♕a4 33.♕d3 ♔g7 34.♕d6 ♕e8 35.♕e5 ♔g8 36.f4 gf4 37.♕f4 ♕b5 38.♔a2 ♕a5 39.♔b2 ♕b5 40.♔c1 ♕d3 41.♕f6 ♕e3 42.♔b2 b5 43.♕g6 ♔f8 44.♕f6 ♔e8 45.♕g6 ♔d7 46.♕f7 ♔c6 47.♕e8 ♔d5 48.♕a8 ♔c4 49.♕a6 ♕c3 50.♔b1 ♕e1 51.♔c2 ♕e2 52.♔c1 ♔b3 0-1

Mieses Opening 1.d2-d3



1.d3 is a perfectly playable opening move, given that 1...d6 is a fairly common defence to both 1.e4 and 1.d4.

The first tempo has been usefully employed, and White has played one of the key moves for various important openings: the Réti, the English and the **King's Indian Attack** are the most common.

As a result, this opening does not have its own distinct identity and it is often used as a transpositional device, in the hope that Black may find himself outside his repertoire.

1...d5 is the statistically most common reply, and after the usual ♘f3, ♘bd2 and e4, White is in the **King's Indian Attack**, but of course he has other options.

1. ... e7-e5

White generally chooses to enter the English by playing 2.c4.

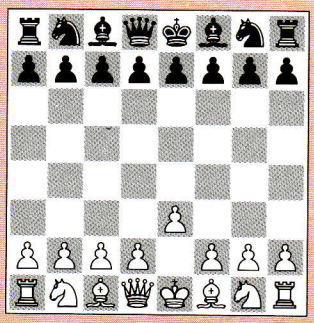
Given that White has not immediately occupied the centre, a good alternative first move for Black might be **1...g6**. Black adopts the same slow cautious strategy as his adversary and establishes a type of **King's Indian**. The two opposing forces eye each other from afar as they slowly ready for battle. May the best player win!

Movsziszian,Karen
Ibarra Chami,Luis Fernando
Balaguer open 2006 (5)

1.d3 d5 2.a3 ♘f6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0 c5 7.♘bd2 ♘c6 8.e4 b6 9.♖e1 e6 10.c3 ♘d7 11.♕c2 ♗a6 12.♗f1 dxe4 13.dxe4 ♗xf1 14.♘xf1 ♘de5 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.♖d1 ♕e7 17.f4 ♘c6 18.♘e3 ♖fd8 19.♗d2 ♖ac8 20.♗e1 b5 21.♕e2 ♕b7 22.e5 ♘e7 23.♘g4 ♘d5 24.♘f2 ♗f8 25.♘e4 ♗e7 26.♗f2 ♖d7 27.♖e1 ♕c6 28.♕f3 ♔h8 29.♖ad1 ♖cd8 30.h3 ♘b6 31.♖xd7 ♖xd7 32.h4 c4 33.♗d4 ♘a4 34.♕f2 a5 35.g4 ♖d8 36.♔h2 ♖g8 37.h5 ♔g7 38.f5 gxf5 39.gxf5 ♔f8 40.f6 ♗d8 41.♕d2 ♗c7 42.♕h6+ ♔e8 43.♕xh7 ♖g4 44.♔h3 ♖f4 45.♘g5 ♖f3+ 46.♔g4 ♖xf6 47.♕h8+ ♔d7 48.♕xf6 ♕g2+ 49.♔f4 ♕d2+ 50.♖e3 1-0

Van 't Kruijs Opening

1.e2-e3



Everything that we said about 1.d2-d3 applies here as well: the move is without doubt a nice way to transpose to a number of white openings or black defences with reversed colours; the **English**, **Bird's Opening**, **Larsen** and **Colle** are the most frequent.

The only line that has its own individual identity is

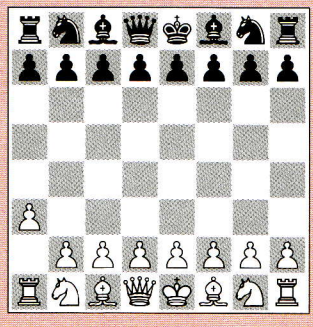
1. e2-e3 e7-e5
2. d2-d4!?

which creates a **reverse French**. Now 2...e4 is risky: following 3.c4 we are in a **reverse Advance Variation**, with a significant extra tempo for White; a better choice is the solid 2...exd4, even if playing the **Exchange Variation** of the **French**, which you enter with 3.exd4, may not be exciting enough for some.

Owen,John
Blackburne,Joseph
London 1868

1.e3 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 e6 4.c4 ♘e7 5.♗e2 b6 6.♘c3 ♗b7 7.♗d2 d6 8.b4 ♘d7 9.♖b1 ♕c8 10.♕b3 ♖b8 11.e4 a6 12.d5 exd5 13.exd5 0-0 14.0-0 ♘f5 15.♖bd1 ♘e5 16.♘e4 ♘xf3+ 17.♗xf3 ♘d4 18.♕d3 ♕f5 19.♔h1 ♖fe8 20.♗c3 ♘xf3 21.♗xg7 ♕xe4 22.♕c3 ♘h4 23.♖g1 ♘f5 24.♗h8 h5 25.♖d3 ♔h7 26.f3 ♕h4 27.g4 ♖e2 0-1

Anderssen Opening
1.a2-a3



In the second half of the 19th Century Adolf Anderssen started seven games that we know of with 1.a2-a3 (and in one of these he beat Morphy!). Of the modern players, only Velimirovic has played it, and then only occasionally.

So what is the idea behind this move that does absolutely nothing in the fight for centre control?

To help us understand better, it is useful to consider that a frequent preparatory move for Black is ...a6. This a useful pawn move, and it is often a fundamental component in many Black defences: you only need to think of the **Benoni** or the **Benko**, or its frequent appearance in the **French**, the **Pirc**, the **King's Indian**, and above all in the **Sicilian**.

Indeed in the **Najdorf** (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6!) it is the key move in the whole line.

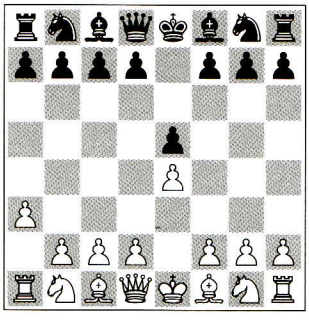
It therefore comes as little surprise that some bright spark had the idea of playing these set-ups with an extra tempo. However, it is essential to remember that ...a6 is fundamentally a reactive move that prepares counterplay on the queenside in openings where White has already taken possession of the centre. The problem here is that it is impossible to have counterplay if the other side is not attacking you.

In other words, Black's best strategy is to avoid very sharp lines so as to reduce the usefulness of playing a2-a3.

With this in mind, **1...♘f6** and **1...g6** look suitable, and it is not a coincidence that they are the best performing replies.

1...d5 is also excellent: after **2.♘f3** Black should simply avoid adventurous variations such as 2...c5 3.c4 d4, which allow White to play a Benko or Benoni with an extra tempo, and instead continue with the solid **2...♘f6**, after which the value of a2-a3 is open to question.

Needless to say, Black can also opt for **1...e5**. However, this allows White to enter the **English** with 2.c4, where the move is quite normal. Otherwise White can play a strange form of Open Game (1.e4 e5) with **2.e4!?**.



Here a2-a3 is odd-looking but useful. Just think how nice it would be to already have a pawn on a6 in the **Giuoco Piano**, or even more so in the **Two**

Knights. Not to mention the fact that a **reverse Spanish Game** is no longer on the cards with the pawn on a3!

Anderssen,Adolf
Morphy,Paul
Paris m 1858 (6)

1.a3 e5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e3 ♗e6 6.♘f3 ♗d6 7.♗e2 0-0 8.d4 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 e4 10.♘d2 f5 11.f4 g5 12.♗c4 ♗xc4 13.♘xc4 gxf4 14.exf4 ♕e8 15.0-0 ♕c6 16.♕b3 ♕d5 17.♖b1 b6 18.♕a2 c6 19.♕e2 ♘d7 20.♘e3 ♕e6 21.c4 ♘f6 22.♖b3 ♔f7 23.♗b2 ♖ac8 24.♔h1 ♖g8 25.d5 cxd5 26.cxd5 ♕d7 27.♘c4 ♔e7 28.♗xf6+ ♔xf6 29.♕b2+ ♔f7 30.♖h3 ♖g7 31.♕d4 ♔g8 32.♖h6 ♗f8 33.d6 ♖f7 34.♖h3 ♕a4 35.♖c1 ♖c5 36.♖g3+ ♗g7 37.h3 ♔h8 38.♖xg7 ♖xg7 39.♖c3 e3 40.♖xe3 ♖xc4 41.♕f6 ♖c1+ 42.♔h2 ♕xf4+ 0-1

Anderssen,Adolf
Morphy,Paul
Paris m 1858 (10)

1.a3 e5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e3 ♗e6 6.♘f3 ♗d6 7.♗e2 0-0 8.0-0 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 f5 10.d4 e4 11.♘d2 ♖f6 12.f4 ♖h6 13.g3 ♘d7 14.♘c4 ♗xc4 15.♗xc4+ ♔h8 16.♖a2 ♕e7 17.a4 ♘f6 18.♕b3 b6 19.♗e6 ♖e8 20.♗c4 ♘g4 21.♖g2 ♖b8 22.♗e2 ♘f6 23.c4 c6 24.♗b2 ♕f7 25.♕c2 ♗e7 26.♗c3 ♖g8 27.♖a1 g5 28.fxg5 ♖xg5 29.a5 ♗d6 30.axb6 axb6 31.♖a8+ ♖g8 32.♕a4 ♖xa8 33.♕xa8+ ♕e8 34.♕xe8+ ♘xe8 35.c5 ♗c7 36.♗c4 ♔g7 37.cxb6 ♗xb6 38.♖b2 ♗c7 39.♖b7 ♔f6 40.♗b4 ♖g6 41.♗f8 h5 42.♔f2 h4 43.gxh4 ♖g4 44.h5 ♖h4 45.h6 ♖xh2+ 46.♔g1 ♖h3 47.♗f1 ♖g3+ 48.♔f2 ♖g4 49.♗c4 ♖h4 50.♗g8 ♗d6 51.♗xd6 ♘xd6 52.♖d7 ♘e8 53.h7 ♔g5 54.♖e7 ♘d6 55.♖e6 ♘c4 56.♖xc6 ♘d2 57.♔e2 ♖h2+ 58.♔d1 ♘f3 59.♖c7 ♔g6 60.d5 f4 61.exf4 e3 62.♖e7 e2+ 63.♖xe2 ♖h1+ 64.♔c2 ♘d4+ 65.♔d2 ♘xe2 66.♔xe2 ♔g7 67.♔e3 ♖e1+ 68.♔d4 ♖f1 69.♔e5 ♖e1+ 70.♔f5 ♖d1 71.♗e6 ♖d4 72.♔e5 ♖d1 73.f5 ♖h1 74.f6+ ♔xh7 75.♔d6 ♖a1 76.♔e7 ♖a7+ 77.♗d7 1-0

Ni Hua
Ye Jiangchuan
Jinan 2005 (5)

1.a3 g6 2.b4 ♗g7 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘f3 0-0 5.e3 d6 6.♗b2 ♘bd7 7.♗e2 e5 8.c4 exd4 9.♗xd4 b6 10.0-0 ♗b7 11.♘bd2 ♕e7 12.♕c2 ♖fd8 13.♕b2 c5 14.♗c3 ♖ab8 15.♖fd1 a6 16.♘f1 b5 17.cxb5 axb5 18.bxc5 ♘xc5 19.♗d4 ♘e6 20.♗c3 ♘c5 21.♕a2 ♘a4 22.♗d4 ♘e4 23.♗xg7 ♔xg7 24.♖d4 ♘ac3 25.♕b2 ♕f6 26.♗d3 ♖bc8 27.♖c1 ♖c5 28.♗xe4 ♘xe4 29.♖cd1 ♖dc8 30.♕b4 ♘c3 31.♖1d2 ♗xf3 32.♖f4 ♖f5 33.gxf3 ♖xf4 34.♕xf4 ♕xf4 35.exf4 ♖a8 36.♖xd6 ♘e2+ 37.♔g2 ♘xf4+ 38.♔g3 ♘e2+ 39.♔g2 ♖xa3 40.♘e3 ♖a1 41.h4 h5 42.♖b6 ♖g1+ 43.♔h2 ♖b1 44.♘d5 ♖b3 45.f4 ♘d4 46.♘e3 ♖b2 47.♔g2 b4 48.♖d6 ♘b5 49.♖b6 ♘d4 50.♖d6 ♘e6 51.f5 gxf5 52.♘xf5+ ♔f6 53.♘e3 b3 54.♔f3 ♖b1 55.♖b6 ♔e5 56.♔g3 ♔e4 57.♖b4+ ♔d3 58.♔f3 ♘d4+ 59.♔g2 ♖c1 60.♖b8 ♖c5 61.♔h2 ♖b5 62.♖xb5 ♘xb5 63.♘d1 ♔c2 64.♘e3+ ♔c1 65.♘c4 ♘d6 66.♘a3 ♔b2 0-1

Very rare openings

Now we have come to the last seven of the twenty legal moves with which White can open the game.

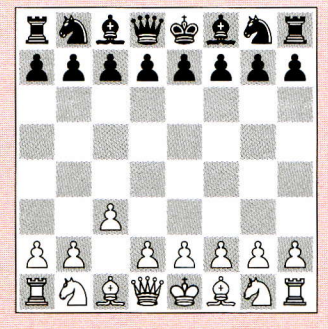
When you think that the most commonly employed of these appears in only one game in 10,000, it becomes clear that this section is of limited practical importance as most of us will hardly ever have to deal with them.

However, it is a most valuable exercise to look at the ideas behind these openings, even when they are debatable (indeed it is probably a more productive experience when they are dubious!). This is because learning what not to do improves our overall understanding of opening play.

Seirawan recounts that when he was acting as a second to the American GM Tarjan, he spent entire weeks analysing an opening line for White, only to realize that in fact the variation was played with the black pieces! Tarjan consoled the downcast Seirawan by wisely reminding him that all analysis is useful and good.

Saragossa Opening

1.c2-c3



1. c2-c3

This is the best of the very rare openings. It supports the d2-d4 advance and therefore must have some merit. The preparatory ...c7-c6 is common in Black defences (**Caro-Kann**, **Slav**, **Semi-Slav**), and thus to play this with an extra tempo could not be so bad. However, to play reactive black defences with reversed colours is a negative approach and the majority of players prefer to play assertively when they have the advantage of the first move.

The move in question has the virtue of allowing transpositions to many of White's openings and could thus take Black into unfamiliar territory: for example after **1...c5 2.e4**, we are in a **Sicilian Alapin**; following **1...e5 2.e4** you enter a type of **Ponziani** (and if Black is someone who never plays 1.e4, it may be a nice idea to play 2.c4!? , transposing to a **Sicilian**!).

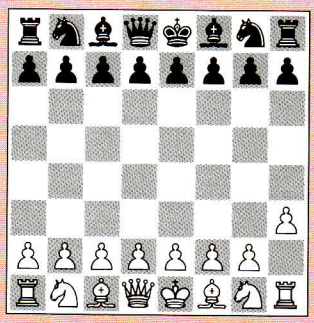
In response to **1...d5** and **1...♘f6**, White

can proceed with **2.d4** and head into a **Colle**, a **Torre Attack** or a **London System** (see Volume 2), all of which feature a pawn advance to c3. The other option is to play 2.e2-e4?! and if Black captures on e4, win back the pawn with 3.♕a4+. However, doing this favours Black's development (3...♘c6 and 4...♘f6).

Hort,Vlastimil
Cramling,Pia
Biel 1984 (4)

1.c3 ♘f6 2.d4 e6 3.♗g5 ♗e7 4.♘d2 d5 5.♘gf3 b6 6.e3 ♗b7 7.♗b5+ c6 8.♗d3 ♘bd7 9.0-0 0-0 10.a4 c5 11.a5 c4 12.♗c2 b5 13.a6 ♗c6 14.♘e5 ♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♘d7 16.♗xe7 ♕xe7 17.f4 f5 18.♘f3 ♘c5 19.♘d4 ♗d7 20.g4 g6 21.♔h1 ♔h8 22.♖g1 ♖g8 23.♖g3 ♖ab8 24.♕d2 ♕f7 25.♖ag1 ♕e7 26.♕g2 ♕f7 27.h4 ♘e4 28.♗xe4 fxe4 29.♕h2 ♖b6 30.f5 ♕e7 31.♖3g2 ♖xa6 32.fxg6 ♖xg6 33.g5 ♖b6 34.h5 ♖g7 35.g6 ♖b8 36.♖f2 ♖f8 37.♖f6 a6 38.♖gf1 ♖fg8 39.♘e2 ♗c8 40.♘f4 ♕c5 41.h6 ♖xg6 42.♘xg6+ hxg6 1-0

Clemenz Opening
1.h2-h3



We can safely imagine that White is thinking *"No g4-pin and no back rank mate"*. In the knowledge that h2-h3 is a valuable move in many White openings, Black's task is to establish set-ups where this move is of no particular use... or better still, a handicap! We must remember that h2-h3, in addition to the benefit of controlling g4, supplies an escape square for the castled king. On the downside, it weakens g3 and creates possibilities for a sacrifice on h3.

Obviously, Black begins to take control of the centre with **1...e5** or **1...d5**. An interesting alternative is **1...b6**, with the idea of discouraging 2.g4, which has the threat (if that is the right word!) of transposing to the **Grob**.
Black's performance with all of these replies is about the same and is equal to the overall performance of White with all openings. This means that choosing 1.h3 is in effect allowing Black to play

with the opening advantage of White. This is not the end of the world, but players do not usually like to squander the plus of White's extra tempo.

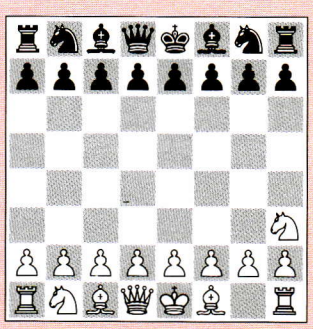
Prohaszka,Peter
Pilgaard,Kim
Budapest 2005 (6)

1.h3 e5 2.c3 d5 3.d4 f6 4.dxe5 fxe5 5.e4 ♘f6 6.♗e3 ♘c6 7.♘d2 ♗e7 8.♗d3 0-0 9.♘gf3 d4 10.cxd4 exd4 11.♗g5 ♗e6 12.0-0 ♔h8 13.♗xf6 gxf6 14.♗c4 ♗d7 15.♗d5 ♘b4 16.♘xd4 ♗xh3 17.gxh3 ♘xd5 18.exd5 ♖g8+ 19.♔h1 ♕xd5+ 20.♘4f3 ♕f5 21.♘h2 ♕xh3 22.♖g1 ♗d6 23.♘f3 ♖xg1+ 24.♕xg1 ♖g8 25.♕f1 ♕f5 26.♕e2 ♕d5 27.♖g1 ♕xa2 28.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 29.♘g4 ♔g7 30.♘e3 ♕e6 31.♔g2 ♕e4 32.♕b5 ♔f8 33.♕d7 a5 34.b3 b6 35.♕c8+ ♕e8 36.♕f5 ♕g6+ 37.♔f1 ♕xf5 38.♘xf5 b5 39.♘xd6 cxd6 40.♔e2 a4 41.♔d2 a3 42.♔c2 b4 43.♘d4 h5 44.♘f5 d5 45.f3 ♔f7 46.♘d4 h4 47.♘e2 h3 48.♘g3 h2 49.f4 d4 50.f5 d3+ 0-1

Rivas Pastor,Manuel
Weber,Francois
Almeria 2006 (3)

1.h3 e5 2.d3 d5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.c3 a5 5.e4 ♗c5 6.♕a4 ♗d7 7.exd5 ♘b4 8.♕b3 a4 9.♕c4 ♘c2+ 10.♔d1 ♘xa1 11.♕xc5 f6 12.c4 ♘e7 13.♘c3 0-0 14.♗e2 b6 15.♕a3 c6 16.d6 ♘c8 17.♗e3 c5 18.♔c1 ♘xd6 19.♔b1 ♘b3 20.axb3 axb3 21.♕xb3 ♖a6 22.♖e1 ♗e6 23.♘d2 ♘f5 24.♘d5 ♖f7 25.♘e4 ♖fa7 26.♔c2 ♗d7 27.♘ec3 ♘e7 28.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 29.♗f3 ♗e8 30.g4 g5 31.♔d2 ♔g7 32.h4 h6 33.hxg5 hxg5 34.♘d5 ♕d6 35.♕c3 ♖a1 36.♗xg5 fxg5 37.♖xe5 ♔f8 38.♖f5+ ♔g8 39.♘f6+ ♔h8 40.♘xe8+ ♕d4 41.♕xd4+ cxd4 42.♖f8+ 1-0

Amar Opening 1.♘g1-h3



This opening carries the name of the Parisian dilettante who used it in the 1930's. However, some wits have declared it to be an acronym of '*Absolutely Mad And Ridiculous*'!

1. ♘g1-h3

This certainly does not contribute to the correct development of the centre, but it is less bad than you might think. The lateral development of a knight does not scandalize the flexibly-minded contemporary player.

1. ... d7-d5

1...e5 2.g3 d5 transposes to the main line.

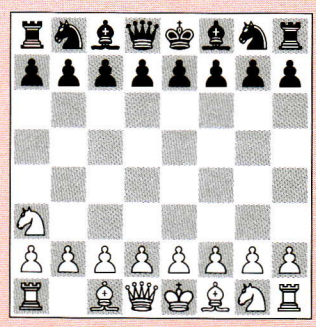
2. g2-g3

Black was threatening the unpleasant 2...♗xh3.

2. ... e7-e5
3. ♗f1-g2 ♘b8-c6
4. d2-d3

and White is playing a type of **reverse Modern** (in which ...♘h6 is sometimes played) with the advantage of the extra tempo, and a reasonable position.

Durkin Opening 1.♘b1-a3



Generally lateral knight moves are dismissed as unproductive: a knight on the edge of the board controls fewer squares and is therefore less effective.

However, this is only true to a certain extent: remember that the piece is mobile and in one bound can reach c4, from which it controls important centre squares.

Attitudes to lateral knight development are changing; in some recent games White (Russian grandmaster Zviagintsev) after 1.e4 c5, continued with 2.♘a3!?.

The fact that he won both games would not be so surprising if his opponents were not both former world champions (!), Khalifman and Ponomariov, who are both famous for their opening expertise.

We have just seen that all in all, **1.♘h3** is feasible, and therefore 1.♘b1-a3 must be even more playable. Why is this so?

Given that the normal way to view these rare openings is as black defences with an extra tempo, it becomes evident that ...♘a6 is more useful and will appear

more frequently than ...♘h6.

In the **Indian defences** (1.d4 ♘f6) ...♘a6 is not only of use, it is of fundamental importance: the most recent lines in the **King's Indian**, **Benoni** and **Grünfeld** include this move.

Therefore Black would be wise to avoid **1...d5** (which is nonetheless a valid move) and instead play **1...e5** with the establishment of a **King's Pawn Game**, where ♘a3 makes little sense.

1...♘f6 and **1...g6** are both reasonable alternatives, whereas **1...c5** gives White the option of playing **2.e4**, transposing to the previously discussed **Zviagintsev Variation**, which is a less innocuous way of dealing with the **Sicilian** than previously thought.

Rivas Pastor,Manuel
Reshevsky,Samuel
Palma de Mallorca 1989 (1)

1.♘h3 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.d4 exd4 4.♕xd4 ♘c6 5.♕a4 ♗b4 6.♗d2 d5 7.a3 ♗xc3 8.♗xc3 ♗xh3 9.gxh3 ♘e4 10.♗g2 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 g5 12.0-0 0-0 13.♕b5 ♖b8 14.♕xd5 ♕f6 15.♕f3 ♕xf3 16.♗xf3 ♘e5 17.♔g2 b6 18.♖fd1 ♖fd8 19.h4 ♔f8 20.♖d4 b5 21.♖dd1 ♔e7 22.h5 f5 23.♔g3 ♔f6 24.h4 ♘c4 25.e4 fxe4 26.♗xe4 h6 27.♔f3 ♖d6 28.♖xd6+ ♘xd6 29.♗g6 ♖b7 30.♖d1 ♔e6 ½-½

Zviagintsev,Vadim
Khalifman,Alexander
Moscow ch-RUS 2005 (2)

1.e4 c5 2.♘a3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♕c7 4.♘f3 g6 5.c3 a6 6.♗xc6 ♕xc6 7.0-0 ♗g7 8.d4 d6 9.d5 ♕c7 10.h3 ♘f6 11.♗f4 0-0 12.♖e1 b5 13.♕d2 ♗b7 14.♖ad1 ♖fe8 15.c4 ♕b6 16.♗h6 ♗h8 17.b3 e6 18.♘g5 exd5 19.cxd5 ♖e7 20.♖e3 ♖ae8 21.♖de1 a5 22.♘b1 b4 23.♕c2 ♘d7 24.♘d2 ♗a6 25.♘gf3 ♘e5 26.♗g5 ♘xf3+ 27.♘xf3 ♖d7 28.e5 dxe5 29.♘xe5 ♖xd5 30.♘xf7 ♖xe3 31.♖xe3 ♔xf7 32.♖e7+ ♔f8 33.♕e4 ♖d1+ 34.♔h2 ♕d6+ 35.f4 ♗f6 36.♗h6+ ♔g8 37.♕a8+ 1-0

Zviagintsev,Vadim
Ponomariov,Ruslan
Sochi tt 2006 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘a3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 g6 4.c3 ♗g7 5.d3 ♘f6 6.f4 0-0 7.♘f3 d6 8.0-0 ♗d7 9.♕e1 e6 10.♕h4 ♘h5 11.g4 ♕xh4 12.♘xh4 ♗f6 13.♘xg6 hxg6 14.gxh5 gxh5 15.♗a4 d5 16.♗d1 c4 17.e5 ♗e7 18.dxc4 d4 19.♘c2 dxc3 20.bxc3 ♘a5 21.♗a3 ♗xa3 22.♘xa3 ♖ac8 23.♗e2 f6 24.♖ad1 ♗e8 25.f5 fxe5 26.fxe6 ♖xf1+ 27.♖xf1 ♔g7 28.♗f3 b5 29.cxb5 ♖xc3 30.♘b1 ♖c5 31.♗e2 e4 32.♔f2 e3+ 33.♔xe3 ♖e5+ 34.♔f3 ♗xb5 35.♗xb5 ♖xb5 36.♖e1 ♖f5+ 37.♔g3 ♔f8 38.♘d2 ♔e7 39.♘f3 ♖d5 40.♔h4 ♘c4 41.♘g5 ♖d2 42.♖c1 ♘d6 43.h3 ♘e8 44.♔xh5 ♖xa2 45.♔g6 ♖a4 46.♖b1 ♘d6 47.♖b8 ♖f4 48.♖a8 ♖f6+ 49.♔h5 ♘b5 50.h4 ♖f4 51.♖h8 ♘d6 52.♖h7+ ♔e8 53.♖xa7 ♘f5 54.♘h7 ♘d4 55.♔g6 ♘xe6 56.♘f6+ ♔d8 57.♖a8+ ♔c7 58.♘d5+ 1-0

Dunst,Theodore
Bernstein,Sidney
New York 1956/57 (11)

1.♘a3 f5 2.c3 ♘f6 3.d4 b6 4.♘f3 ♗b7 5.g3 e6 6.♘c4 ♗e7 7.♗g2 0-0

8.0-0 ♕e8 9.♘ce5 ♘c6 10.♘g5 ♘d8 11.♗xb7 ♘xb7 12.♕d3 ♘d6 13.♘h3 a5 14.a4 ♘g4 15.♘xg4 fxg4 16.♘f4 g5 17.♘g2 ♕h5 18.♗d2 ♖f6 19.♕e3 ♖h6 20.h4 gxh3 21.♘h4 ♘c4 22.♕f3 ♖f8 23.♕xh5 ♖xh5 24.♘f3 ♖xf3 25.exf3 ♘xd2 26.♖fd1 ♘xf3+ 27.♔f1 g4 28.b3 ♗g5 29.♖a2 ♗d2 30.♖c2 ♗e1 31.d5 e5 32.d6 c6 33.♖e2 h2 34.♖e4 ♘d2+ 35.♖xd2 h1♕+ 0-1

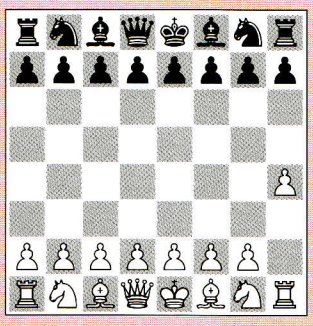
Durkin, Robert
Curtis
cr 1955

1.♘a3 e5 2.♘c4 ♘c6 3.e4 ♘f6 4.d3 d5 5.exd5 ♘xd5 6.♘f3 ♗b4+ 7.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 8.♕xd2 ♕e7 9.0-0-0 0-0 10.♖e1 f6 11.g3 b5 12.♘a5 ♘xa5 13.♕xa5 ♕b4 14.♕xb4 ♘xb4 15.a3 ♘c6 16.♗g2 ♖b8 17.♘d2 ♗b7 18.♗d5+ ♔h8 19.♘b3 ♘a5 20.♗xb7 ♘xb3+ 21.cxb3 ♖xb7 22.♖e4 ♖d8 23.♖d1 c5 24.b4 cxb4 25.♖xb4 a5 26.♖e4 ♔g8 27.♔d2 b4 28.a4 ♖c7 29.♔e3 ♖c2 30.♖d2 ♖dc8 31.d4 ♖8c4 32.f4 exd4+ 33.♖exd4 b3 34.♖d8+ ♔f7 35.♖2d7+ ♔g6 36.♖g8 ♖xb2 37.♖gxg7+ ♔h6 38.♖xh7+ ♔g6 39.g4 f5 40.♖hg7+ ♔h6 41.gxf5 1-0

Grund,Holger
Wilhelmi,Christian
Halle ch-GER jr 1996 (9)

1.♘a3 ♘f6 2.c3 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.d4 d5 5.h3 0-0 6.♗f4 c5 7.e3 ♘c6 8.♗e2 ♘d7 9.0-0 e5 10.♗h2 cxd4 11.cxd4 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.exd4 a6 14.♕b3 ♘b8 15.♗e5 ♘c6 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♖fd1 ♕f6 18.♘c2 ♗f5 19.♘e3 ♘xd4 20.♘xf5+ ♘xf5 21.♕xb7 ♖fb8 22.♕xd5 ♕xb2 23.♗f3 ♖a7 24.♖ac1 ♕f6 25.♗e4 ♖b5 26.♕d3 h5 27.♖c6 ♕b2 28.♖c2 ♕f6 29.a4 ♖e5 30.♖c6 ♕e7 31.♗xf5 ♖xf5 32.♖xa6 ♖xa6 33.♕xa6 ♕b4 34.♕c6 ♖f4 35.g3 ♖c4 36.♕e8 ♖e4 37.♕c6 ♕xa4 38.♕c3+ ♔h7 39.♖d8 ♖e8 40.♖d4 ♕b5 ½-½

Reagan Attack 1.h2-h4



What child has not thought at least once of playing h2-h4 so as to bring the rook into action with ♖h3?

Then someone explains that exchanging a rook for a bishop (sooner or later there is the inevitable ...♗xh3) is like losing two pawns and 1.h4 disappears from his or her embryonic repertoire.

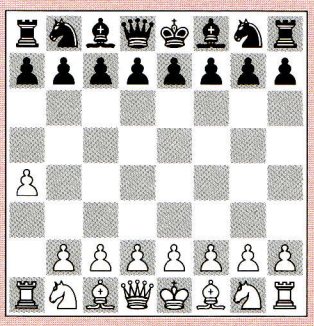
Even without the idea of a follow-up 2.♖h3,

1. h2-h4

remains an extremely dubious move. The weakening of the kingside is not justified by dreams of some distant kingside attack.

The normal 1...e5 or 1...d5 give Black a lovely game, and he just needs to be careful not to castle too soon and in so doing favour White's opening move.

Ware Opening 1.a2-a4



Like 1.h4 in the Reagan,

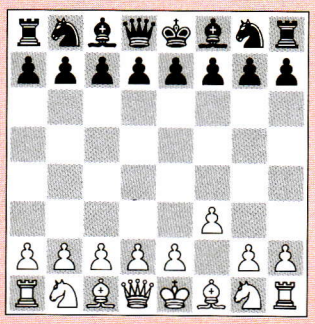
1. a2-a4

is more damaging than useful: however it is not as bad because problems on the queenside are generally less significant than on the kingside!

White denies himself the possibility of playing a2-a3, which is a big price to pay for the unnecessary control of b5 that this move grants.

Almost all of Black's normal moves are good and will lead to positions where Black has better prospects than White.

1.f2-f3



And now we are at the end of our four-volume work.

It is with regret that we finish with what is generally considered to be the worst of the 20 legal moves available to White at the beginning of the game. But as we have discussed the openings in descending order of popularity it was inevitable that at the end we would be scraping the bottom of the barrel!

Given its lowly status, we preferred not to dishonour anyone by associating their name with this ill-advised move and we have simply called it **1.f3**.

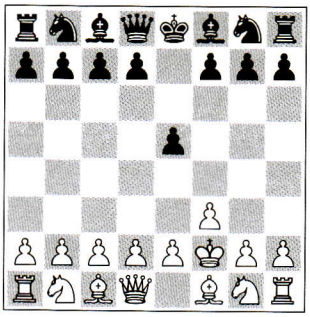
It is clear that this move makes no contribution to development and weakens the king's security.

Without doubt, Black's most effective reply is

1. ... e7-e5!

In a King's Pawn Game there are greater chances of exploiting the vulnerable monarch. The alternative 1...d5 is not bad, but it allows 2.f4!? with a transposition to the Dutch, which may not be the best on offer for White, but at least it is within the realms of the normal.

2. ♔e1-f2?!



An absurd but strangely frequent move. This is a multi-purpose bad move. White neglects development, loses the right to castle and places his king on a dangerous square.

The chess engines give Black a slight advantage after 1...e5; after the king move, this evaluation correctly becomes a clear plus for the holder of the black pieces.

The only good thing that can be said about **2.♔f2** is that it is definitely better than 2.g4??, which after 2...♕h4 results in the notorious **Fool's Mate**, whose delightful simplicity encourages children to believe that chess is an easy game to master.

After the king move, we have

2. ... d7-d5
3. e2-e3 ♗f8-c5

and Black's better coordinated and more active pieces represent a clear advantage.

The only explanation for opening with 1.f3 is that in his surprise Black may do something foolish. Though this may occasionally happen, shooting yourself in the foot is probably not the best way to unsettle your adversary. As Bobby Fischer remarked: *"I do not believe in psychology, I believe in good moves"*.

hear! hear !

Kirillov,Andrey
Grinko,Julia
Tomsk 1999 (2)

1.h4 e5 2.h5 h6 3.c3 d5 4.d4 ♗d6 5.dxe5 ♗xe5 6.♘f3 ♗f6 7.g3 ♘e7 8.♗g2 c6 9.♗f4 ♘d7 10.♘bd2 ♘c5 11.♘b3 ♘e4 12.♘fd2 ♘g5 13.e4 dxe4 14.♗xg5 ♗xg5 15.♘xe4 ♕xd1+ 16.♖xd1 ♘f5 17.f4 ♗e7 18.♔f2 g6 19.♖he1 ♗e6 20.♘bc5 ♘g7 21.hxg6 fxg6 22.♘xe6 ♘xe6 23.♘d6+ 1-0

Kadas,Gabor
Arkhipov,Sergey
Kecskemet 1984

1.h4 e5 2.d4 ed4 3.♘f3 c5 4.c4 d5 5.e3 de3 6.cd5 ef2 7.♔f2 ♘f6 8.♗b5 ♗d7 9.♖e1 ♗e7 10.d6 ♗b5 11.♖e7 ♔f8 12.♘g5 ♗e8 13.♕b3 ♘g4 14.♔e1 c4 15.♕f3 ♘f6 16.♕f6 gf6 17.♘e6 fe6 18.♗h6 ♔g8 19.♖g7 ♔f8 20.♖b7 ♔g8 21.♖g7 ♔f8 22.♖d7 ♔g8 23.♖d8 ♔f7 24.d7 1-0

Ware,Preston
Delmar,Eugene
New York ch-USA 1880 (8)

1.a4 e5 2.e3 d5 3.c3 ♗d6 4.d4 ♘c6 5.♗b5 ♗d7 6.de5 ♘e5 7.♗d7 ♕d7 8.♕d5 0-0-0 9.♘f3 ♘g4 10.h3 ♘f2 11.♖f1 ♘d3 12.♔e2 ♘c1 13.♖c1 ♘f6 14.♕a5 a6 15.♖d1 ♖he8 16.♘bd2 ♕e6 17.♘f1 ♘e4 18.♕d5 ♘g3 19.♔f2 ♘h1 20.♔e2 ♘g3 21.♔f2 ♕h6 22.♕d4 ♘e4 23.♔e2 ♗c5 24.♕c4 ♖d1 25.♔d1 ♗e3 26.♔c2 ♘d6 27.♕g4 f5 28.♕h4 ♕g6 29.♕g3 ♕e6 30.♘e3 ♕e4 31.♔b3 ♕e3 32.♖e1 ♕b6 33.♔a2 ♘e4 34.♕g7 ♕e6 35.♔a1 ♖d8 36.♘d4 ♕c4 37.♕e7 ♕a4 38.♔b1 ♖e8 39.♕h4 c5 40.♘f5 ♘c3 41.bc3 ♕b3 42.♔c1 ♕c3 43.♔d1 ♖d8 44.♔e2 ♕d3 45.♔f2 ♕f5 46.♔g1 ♕d7 47.♔h1 ♕c7 48.♕g4 ♔b8 49.♖c1 b5 50.♕e6 ♖d6 51.♕e4 c4 52.♖f1 ♖d8 53.g4 ♕b7 54.♕b7 ♔b7 55.♔g2 c3 56.♔f3 ♖f8 57.♔e2 ♖f1 0-1

Rogers,Jonathan
Ward,Christopher
England tt 2005/06 (10)

1.a4 d5 2.♘f3 ♗g4 3.d4 ♗xf3 4.exf3 e6 5.c3 ♘d7 6.a5 c6 7.a6 b6 8.♗d3 g6 9.♗f4 ♗g7 10.0-0 ♘e7 11.♕d2 0-0 12.♗h6 ♗xh6 13.♕xh6 c5 14.♖d1 ♘c6 15.♗b5 ♖c8 16.♘a3 ♘db8 17.♘c2 ♕f6 18.dxc5 bxc5 19.♘e3 ♕g7 20.♕f4 c4 21.♘c2 ♕e5 22.♕d2 ♕c7 23.f4 ♖fd8 24.♕e3 ♘e7 25.♘d4 ♕b6 26.f5 gxf5 27.♕g5+ ♔f8 28.♕h6+ ♔g8 29.♖e1 ♘g6 30.♖e3 ♘d7 31.♗xd7 ♖xd7 32.♖ae1 e5 33.♘xf5 f6 34.♖g3 ♕e6 35.♘h4 ♖g7 36.♘xg6 hxg6 37.♖xg6 ♖xg6 38.♕xg6+ ♔f8 39.h4 ♔e7 40.♕h7+ ♕f7 41.♕c2 ♕h5 42.g3 ♔e6 43.♕a4 ♕e8 44.♕a5 ♕d8 45.♕a4 ♕e8 46.♕d1 ♕g6 47.b3 cxb3 48.♕xb3 ♕d3 49.♖d1 ♕f3 50.♖c1 ♖g8 51.♕c2 f5 52.♖e1 f4 53.♕h7 ♖xg3+ 54.fxg3 ♕xg3+ 55.♔f1 ♕f3+ 56.♔g1 ♕g3+ 57.♔f1 ♕f3+ ½-½

Desmarais,Chris
Seres,Lajos
Budapest 2001 (13)

1.f3 e5 2.♔f2 d5 3.d3 d4 4.e4 dxe3+ 5.♗xe3 f5 6.g3 ♘c6 7.♗g2 ♘f6 8.♘e2 ♘d5 9.♕d2 ♗d6 10.♖e1 f4 11.gxf4 ♕h4+ 12.♘g3 0-0 13.fxe5 ♘xe5 14.♔g1 ♘xf3+ 15.♗xf3 ♖xf3 16.♗f2 ♗xg3 17.♗xg3 ♖xg3+ 18.hxg3 ♕xg3+ 19.♔h1 ♗g4 0-1

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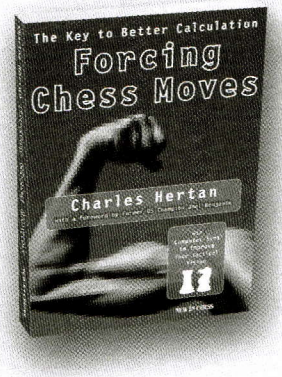

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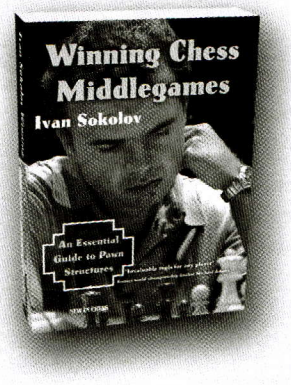

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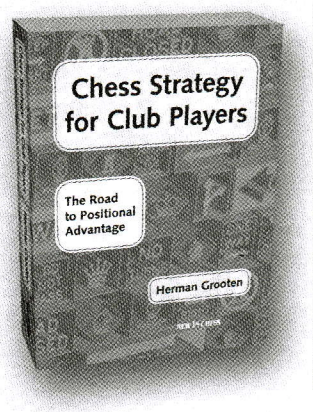

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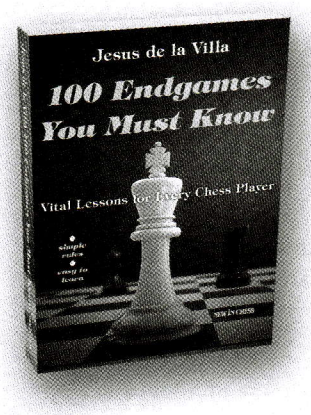

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